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THE

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR

Edited by the

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Editor of "The Expositor"

PREBENDARY ROW'S
CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

NEW YORK
THOMAS WHITTAKER
2 AND 3, BIBLE HOUSE

[189-?] Row
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A MANUAL OF

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

BY THE REV.
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SIXTH EDITION

NEW YORK
THOMAS WHITTAKER
2 AND 3, BIBLE HOUSE

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

PREVIOUSLY to entering on our subject, it will be necessary to set before the reader what it is that the Christian advocate is called upon to defend. A misapprehension on this point is attended with very serious consequences, because it is possible to extend the defence of Christianity over an indefinite range of subject-matter, including important points of philosophy and science, of history and critical investigation, the canonical authority of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, their authorship and authenticity, the nature, possibility, and evidential value of miracles, and a vast number of similar inquiries. There are not wanting those who would require of him a defence of what are called by different sections of the Christian Church "Fundamental Doctrines," not merely as they are set forth in Scripture, but as they have been formulated by theologians. The treatment of all these subjects, and the answering the various difficulties connected with them, could only be done effectually in a work extending over a considerable number of volumes. But for the overwhelming majority of mankind who are engaged

in the active duties of life, such an investigation is impossible; for they have neither time nor talent for it; and what is more important still, there are numerous points connected with such investigations which require a special training on the part of the student to render his judgment respecting them of the smallest value. In all such subjects he is compelled to rely on the judgment of experts. But Christianity, if true, is a matter of such profound importance that we require to rest our belief in it on evidence which is intelligible to men of ordinary understanding; for, according to its principles, it is to be embraced, not on the authority of Churches, ancestors, or experts, but because it commends itself as true to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There is also a great danger in extending the defence of Christianity over a wider range of subject-matter than is absolutely necessary. My meaning will be rendered plain by an illustration drawn from military tactics. A prudent general will never present an unduly extended front to his opponent. If he does so, he is in danger of having his line of defence broken through, even by an inferior force, when concentrated, and brought to bear on some weak point of his position. A place whose lines of defence extend over a certain area may be impregnable if defended by ten thousand soldiers, even against an army ten times as numerous; but if the area is enlarged four times, the lines may be easily broken through at every point. Moreover, my readers have doubtless read of the military phrase "the key of a position." What is this key? A position which, as long as it can be held,

commands the entire ground. Outworks may be of more or less value; but as long as the key of the position can be held in force, the place is safe. I am using the language of metaphor, but its application to the defence of Christianity is obvious. Let us then follow the example of our military generals, and concentrate our defence on those points which are vital to its truth as a Divine revelation; and if there is a single key which commands the entire Christian position, let us order our entire argument so as to occupy it with our utmost strength.

The question, therefore, naturally arises, Is there such a key? I answer, Yes. It is the historical truth of the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ our Lord, as it is depicted in the Gospels. If He was such as the Gospels depict Him to have been, then it follows that His character is a superhuman one, and consequently that Christianity is a Divine revelation. But if, on the other hand, we cannot prove that the great outline of the character depicted in the Gospels is historically true; if, moreover, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a fiction, and not a fact, then the proof of every subordinate position would fail to establish the truth of Christianity as such a revelation. This point is of such deep importance that I must ask most earnest attention to it. Christianity differs from every other known religion in the fact that it is based on the person of its founder. He is the sole foundation on which the Church rests; the principle of its unity; the inspiring motive to holiness; the spiritual power which makes the Christian strong in the discharge of every duty; in

a word, Jesus Christ may be truly said to constitute Christianity itself. In proof of this I say, Read your New Testaments, and you will see that what I say is true. The Revised Version consists of one hundred and ninety-four pages, and there are not five in which the sacred name does not occur, or is not directly alluded to, and in some it occurs twenty times. Of the religions now existing in the world, Buddhism is said to number four hundred million, and Mohammedanism over one hundred and twenty million votaries; yet if we were to strike the person of Sakya Muni, the founder of Buddhism, and that of Mahomet, of Mohammedanism, out of these respective systems, their religions, as systems of religion, would remain intact. The same is true of Brahminism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and every other religion of the past or the present. It is true even of Judaism, for the person of Moses might be removed out of it, but the system would remain intact. All these religions have had founders, but they have not one of them erected their systems on their own persons. But Christianity is so completely based on the person of its founder, that if we remove every reference to Jesus Christ out of the New Testament, the brief remainder becomes a mass of shapeless ruins.

The unique position which the person of Jesus Christ occupies in Christianity is of great evidential value, on which I shall have more to say hereafter; but it has been necessary to draw the reader's attention to it in this place for the purpose of showing that His person, work, and teaching constitute the key of the Christian position. If we can prove that the Christ

of the Gospels is not a mere creation of the imagination, but an historical reality, it follows that Christianity must be a Divine revelation. Further, if Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, all the objections which are urged against the belief in miracles fall to the ground. In that case, at least, one great miracle has certainly been performed; and if one, there is no difficulty in accepting a hundred on the same evidence as we accept the ordinary facts of history. It cannot be too carefully impressed on people's minds that there is one miracle, and one only, on which the writers of the New Testament stake the truth of Christianity,—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Other mighty works are occasionally referred to as having been wrought by Him in the Acts of the Apostles; but the references to them are incidental. The apostolic miracles, which are recorded in the same book, and occasionally referred to by the writers of the epistles, were for the most part performed in proof of His resurrection and Messiahship. But, as St. Paul says, the life of Christianity is staked on the truth of the Resurrection. His language on this point is most decisive. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have witnessed of God, that He raised up Christ, Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised." This one miracle, therefore, if it can be proved to have been a fact, is amply sufficient to establish the truth of our Lord's Divine mission; and, as it happens, no event in the history of the remote past possesses an historical attestation which is

equally strong. As far, therefore, as miracles are concerned, on this one miracle our defence should be concentrated.

But as the greatest confusion has been introduced into the controversy respecting miracles, both by theologians and scientists, by an inaccurate use of terms, and also by introducing into the definition of a miracle terms which are not only unnecessary, but positively misleading, before proceeding farther I must endeavour to place the subject in a simple form before the reader. Thus, miracles have been defined by various writers as events which involve violations or suspensions of the forces and the laws of nature, or as the bringing in of a higher law to suspend the action of a lower one. The laws of nature are also habitually spoken of as if they were efficient causes, capable of effecting this or that; *i.e.*, they are confounded with the forces of nature. This is a point of such importance that I must ask the reader's careful attention to it. What, then, in a scientific sense is a law of nature? A law of nature in a scientific sense is nothing but an invariable order of events or sequences. As such it can effect nothing. It is the forces of nature which produce results, not its laws. We have all heard of such expressions as, "If a man will dash himself against the laws of nature, he must take the consequences of so doing." But the only things against which we can dash ourselves are the forces of nature, for its laws have no existence outside our minds. An illustration will make the distinction in question clear. The law of gravitation is frequently spoken of as producing a

vast variety of results. But what is this law of gravitation? It simply denotes the order in which material things fall to a common centre, in certain ratios, dependent on their bulk and distance. The law of gravitation, therefore, like all the other laws of nature, effects nothing; it is the force of gravitation, not its law, which produces the various results which we behold. It is incredible what a mass of confusion has been introduced into the controversy about miracles from want of attending to this obvious distinction.

In defining a miracle it is not only unnecessary, but dangerous, to introduce into its definition any theory as to the mode in which it is performed, as, for example, when miracles have been spoken of as involving suspensions of the forces or violations of the laws of nature, or as brought about by the suspension of a lower law by the introduction of a higher one. The simple truth is, we know nothing respecting the *modus operandi* by which God works a miracle; and to introduce any of these theories into our definition is equivalent to saying that we possess such knowledge. For aught we know, God can perform a miracle without suspending the operation of a single force of nature, or violating the laws of its activity. This was apparently the case with at least one of the miracles which are recorded in the New Testament—viz., when Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. The force of gravitation was in full activity everywhere around him: on the vessel, the waves, and on Peter himself; for the moment his faith failed he began to sink. By what agency he was sustained

we know not. This being so, the agency which is employed in working a miracle ought not to enter into its definition. I especially draw attention to this point, because the affirmation that miracles involve suspensions of the forces, and violations of the laws of nature, is one of those things which have brought revelation into needless collision with physical science.

Assuming the truth of these positions, I am now able to give a definition of a miracle which shall be adequate for all the purposes of the Christian argument, and at the same time avoid the difficulties with which it has been encumbered. A miracle is an event for the occurrence of which no force, or combination of forces, known to man is able to account. But our definition must not stop here, because it may be urged that such an event may be brought about by some natural force with which we are unacquainted, such, for example, as is alleged to be the case with the spiritualistic wonders. We must, therefore, add to our definition that to constitute such an event a miracle in the Christian sense of that term, it must not be an occurrence which takes place casually, for which no reason can be assigned, but immediately on the bidding of the person who undertakes to perform it; and that it should be performed with a definite purpose previously announced or understood by those who witness it. An example of such a miracle we have in our Lord's cure of the paralytic. The Pharisees disputed His right to forgive sins. Turning to them, He said, "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He

saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thy house," and the words were no sooner uttered than the thing was done. Such an occurrence the strongest sceptic would have little difficulty in allowing to be a manifestation of the presence of a superhuman power. Such, also, were several of the apostolic miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of proving that He was risen from the dead.

But our definition requires to be still further guarded. Many people believe that superhuman powers exist, other than God, who are capable of working miracles, such, for instance, as demoniacal miracles. Whether demons possess such a power, or, if they possess it, whether they are permitted to exert it, I shall not inquire. My own opinion is, that they are never permitted to work *real* miracles. But assuming that they are, all that is necessary for me to do is to point out how such miracles are to be discriminated from those wrought by God. This our Lord has enabled us to do. When His opponents affirmed that He wrought His miracles by the power of Satan, He drew attention to the fact that their evident end and purpose was the subversion of his kingdom. The mark, therefore, by which a Divine miracle may be distinguished from a Satanic one, or a mere vulgar wonder, is the fact that miracles wrought by God will always bear the impress of the holiness and benevolence of their Author. My general conclusion, therefore, is, that events whose occurrence no force known to man is able to account for, and which bear the characteristics above referred to, may be safely

assumed to have been wrought by the finger of God, and to denote the presence of a superhuman power.

The reader also should observe that there are three words in the Greek of the New Testament which are very frequently translated in the Authorised Version by the word "miracle," but which are intended to denote three different functions of what are commonly called miracles, viz., σημεῖα, signs; δυναμεῖς, works of might; and τέρατα, wonders. The σημεῖα, or signs, are miracles which are strictly evidential, being wrought for the purpose of proving that Jesus was the Messiah. Such are all the miracles recorded in St. John's Gospel, which its author uniformly designates "signs." The δυναμεῖς, or works of might, denoted the presence of a superhuman power. The τέρατα, or wonders, served the purpose of drawing attention to the message of the Divine Messenger, which attention He would otherwise have found it very difficult to obtain. As an instance of these τέρατα, or wonders, we may notice those wrought at Ephesus, by garments taken from St. Paul's body. It should be observed, however, that all the miracles which are recorded in the three first Gospels, although in one point of view they were evidential—*i.e.*, they were Messianic works—were not wrought with *a directly evidential purpose.* Such unquestionably were those which our Lord forbade to be disclosed. "See thou tell no man," says He. The Evangelists affirm that He wrought many of them because He was moved with compassion for human suffering, and in answer to the prayer of faith. When, on the other

hand, He was challenged to work a miracle in proof of His Divine mission, He uniformly refused to do so.

I must now ask the reader's attention to a point which, in these modern times, is of the greatest importance in connection with Christian evidences. The proof of Christianity has been hitherto made to rest on what is called its miraculous attestation. Miracles have been placed in the forefront of the Christian argument, and other evidences have occupied in it a very subordinate position. This is the line of reasoning which modern defenders of Christianity have all but unanimously adopted. An opinion, however, has become widely diffused among thoughtful men that this mode of putting the argument is unsound. I purpose, therefore, in this treatise to reverse this order of stating the Christian argument, and to assign to the moral evidences of Christianity the first place in the Christian argument, and to what is designated its miraculous attestation the second.

Hitherto, our evidential treatises have restricted the term "miracle" to an occurrence in the physical universe the origin of which cannot be accounted for by the action of its known forces. But why the expression should be limited to occurrences of this kind, as constituting the sole Divine attestation of Christianity, it is difficult to say. Surely there is an order in the moral and spiritual universe no less real than in the material. Moral and spiritual forces act no less in conformity with moral and spiritual laws, than the forces which energise in the physical universe act in conformity with material laws. If

deviations from the accustomed order of the one, or the occurrence of events which cannot be accounted for by the action of its known forces, prove the presence of a Divine power, so must similar phenomena in the spiritual and moral world be manifestations of the energetic presence of the same power. Such manifestations I shall designate "moral miracles," by which I mean events occurring in the moral and spiritual universe for the origin of which none of its known forces are able to account. If I can prove that such manifestations have taken place in connection with Christianity, it will be evidence that a Divine power has manifested itself in it. This being so, the all-important question will be, Are we able to verify in connection with it the presence of such a superhuman power in the history of the past, or in the facts of the present? If we can, I contend that it will afford a stronger proof of its Divine character than that which can be supplied by miracles wrought in the physical universe more than eighteen hundred years ago, which now require a long and complicated chain of historical reasoning to establish their truth. As, however, this change of front is one of the greatest importance, I must set before the reader some reasons for making it, in the briefest form I am able.

All the requirements of modern thought point to verification as the great test of truth. The entire history of discovery has proved that theories which cannot be submitted to this test have failed to conduct us to the realities of things. Hence has arisen a great difficulty in accepting as actual occurrences such

events as, being without counterparts in the modern world, require that these truths should be established by a long and intricate chain of reasoning, owing to the danger that among its numerous links there may be flaws which have escaped our observation. This has introduced a difficulty into the proof of miracles which was little felt in former times, as, from the nature of the case, they cannot be subjected to any species of verification. This difficulty has been greatly increased owing to the vast number of miracles which have been reported in every age of the Church, which it is impossible to accept as true, but many of which rest on a respectable amount of testimony, such, for example, as the spiritualistic wonders which are professed to be wrought in these days of enlightenment, and which are believed in as realities by at least two eminent scientific men, and by many others of no inconsiderable reputation for mental ability. These and several other points, to which I need not refer, have greatly increased the complication of the historic proof, rendering it necessary clearly to discriminate between miracles which are impostures, miracles which have originated in various forms of fanaticism, enthusiasm, and credulity, and miracles which are real miracles, wrought in attestation of a Divine revelation.

Very different, however, will it be with those manifestations of a superhuman power energising in the moral and spiritual worlds which I shall claim for Christianity. I shall be able to prove that they may be clearly traced in the history of the past, and in the facts of the present. The facts are plain and

simple, and admit of an easy verification, not a few of them existing at the present moment before our eyes, and the remainder requiring a very ordinary acquaintance with the facts of history to establish their truth. As their reality is beyond dispute, the only question that can arise is, Are they manifestations of a superhuman power, or can they be accounted for as the results of the known moral and spiritual forces which energise in man? On this my readers must judge when I set the evidence before them. But there is another advantage which I claim for the moral miracles in question. Instead of the proof of them becoming more difficult by the lapse of time, the evidence on which they rest becomes stronger and stronger; it is, in fact, far stronger in the present day than it was in the first century of Christianity.

Further, I must ask the reader to observe that unbelief has shifted the grounds of its attack since the last century and the beginning of the present. It was in answer to that form of unbelief that most of our evidential treatises were composed; and they have been so far effectual that they have driven it from the grounds which were then taken by the opponents of Christianity. The great majority of unbelievers in the times in question endeavoured to prove that Christianity was founded on fraud. At the present day there is scarcely an unbeliever of note, either in this country or on the Continent, who will venture to maintain that the founders of Christianity were impostors. On the contrary, they now for the most part affirm that they were honest but deluded fanatics, who were the prey of a number of strange

mental hallucinations; or else that Christianity has been gradually evolved by the ordinary forces which operate in the moral world. This change of front, therefore, on the part of unbelief renders necessary a similar change on the part of those who undertake the defence of Christianity.

The change of front which I propose to adopt in this treatise is one of such importance that I am bound to show that its fundamental principle was adopted by our Lord Himself whenever He referred to the evidence of His Divine mission. My proposition is, that our Lord assigned to the moral evidences of His Divine mission the first place in point of importance, and to what are commonly designated His miracles the second place.

It is certain from the Gospels, especially from the fourth Gospel, that our Lord did not rest His claim to be the Christ, nor the acceptance of His mission to be authoritative and Divine, exclusively on the miracles which He performed. Of this the following passage is a direct affirmation: "I am He that beareth witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me" (John viii. 18).

In this passage a marked distinction is laid down between our Lord's own testimony and that of His Father to the truth of His Divine mission. In what, then, did this distinction consist? His own testimony could have been no other than His self-evidencing Divine character; the testimony of His Father, the miracles that He performed. This is brought out clearly in the following most important declaration: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me

not; but if I do them, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John x. 37, 38).

That the works here referred to are His miracles is rendered certain by the following utterance: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not from Myself, but the Father, abiding in Me, doeth His works" (John xiv. 10, 11).

The first of these utterances is important because it was addressed by our Lord to His opponents; and, therefore, it throws a clear light on the view which He took of the evidences of His Divine mission. In it He affirmed that those who heard Him ought to have believed on His own testimony—*i.e.*, on the evidence afforded by His moral and spiritual character, and His entire working by which He appealed to the inmost convictions of the human spirit. But if this failed to produce this result, then He appealed to His miraculous works as the testimony of His Father, yet not as mere wonders or manifestations of power, but to their entire moral environment; nor merely to them as simply evidencing a Divine commission, but as proving His union with the Father, or, as He Himself puts it, "that ye may know and understand, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, He rests the acceptance of His testimony on higher grounds than the attestation of miracles wrought for the purpose of confirming the truth of His assertions. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have

seen, and ye receive not our witness." Nicodemus had spoken of the signs which He wrought, as having led him to believe that He was a teacher come from God; yet throughout this discourse our Lord makes a number of affirmations respecting His Divine character, which Nicodemus heard with profound astonishment; but He not only works no miracle to prove the truth of His affirmations, but He does not make even an allusion to them. This Gospel also abounds with a number of similar affirmations, in which He lays claim to a character highly superhuman. These claims are so lofty that some writers have affirmed that nothing but the performance of a miracle could justify the acceptance of them as true. Yet it is a remarkable fact that our Lord never once attempted to prove the truth of a single utterance of His by working one, however lofty and, humanly speaking, incredible may have been His claims.

The entire eighth chapter of this Gospel consists of a discussion between our Lord and His opponents, in which they go the length of charging Him with being possessed with a devil. Throughout it He makes a number of claims to a Divine character, which the Jews denied in the strongest manner. Yet He never once offers to confirm the truth of His assertions by working a miracle in confirmation of them, or even refers to any miracle previously wrought by Him. On the contrary, the sole reason which He gives for the acceptance of His utterances as true is His own perfect sinlessness. "Which of you," says He, "convicteth Me of sin? and if I say truth, why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God heareth the words of

God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God." The entire reasoning of the chapter is based on the self-evidencing power of His Divine person.

In our Lord's last discourse the Apostle Philip makes a request that He would afford the apostles a visible manifestation of the Father, and declares that if He would do so, it would be sufficient for their complete conviction. What is our Lord's reply?

"Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake" (John xiv. 9-12).

In this utterance the Divine Speaker affirms that the Father's perfections manifestly shine forth in His own person. On what, then, does He ground this lofty claim? First, on His own word, thereby affirming that His Divine person was self-evidential; but, if this failed to produce conviction, then He refers to His works (His works, of course, include His miracles) as evidences of the indwelling of God in Him. But, according to the commonly-accepted theory, He ought to have wrought a miracle to prove the truth of the assertion in question; yet He performed none.

Many similar affirmations might be quoted from this Gospel, but these are amply sufficient to prove the point in question.

Although no such explicit affirmations can be found in the three first Gospels, they afford abundant confirmation of our position. It is a remarkable fact

that, whenever our Lord's opponents challenged Him to work a miracle in proof of His Divine mission, He uniformly refused to do so. "An evil and adulterous generation," said He, "seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah," *i.e.*, His resurrection. This is inexplicable if He viewed these signs as constituting not only the sole and only, but even the most important, proof of His Messiahship.

The following miracles, however, which are recorded in the Gospels, were wrought with a directly evidential purpose: 1st, the cure of the paralytic; 2nd, the miracles wrought before the disciples of John the Baptist, which our Lord directed to be reported to him, as signs that He was the Christ; 3rd, the resurrection of Lazarus; but, in most cases, when the Evangelists assign a motive for performing miracles, they attribute it to His compassion for suffering. Yet these miracles, in common with His other actions, formed a portion of His Divine working which He uniformly appealed to as proving that He came out from God. Also in the message which He sent to John the Baptist, after directing the messengers to report the miracles which He wrought before them, He adds as a truly Messianic work, "And the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

Moreover, the self-evidencing power of our Lord's Divine person occupies a very prominent place in the apostolic writings. So effectually does it pervade the First Epistle of St. John, that it would be necessary for me to quote a large portion of it in proof of it. Nor is it less certain that St. Paul's mode of placing

the claims of Christianity to be accepted as a Divine revelation is precisely similar. With his epistles in our hands, it is impossible to doubt that the apostle viewed the moral and spiritual power residing in the person of Jesus Christ as the all-commanding evidence of His Divine mission. They also make it clear that he was not in the habit of appealing to miracles as the sole, or even the most conclusive evidence of the truth of Christianity. With him its great evidential miracle is the Resurrection; and only three, or at most four times, has he referred to miracles as wrought by himself. With him the person of our Lord is at once the substance of revelation and its proof. Numerous and profound as are his doctrinal statements, and vehement as was the opposition of his opponents to certain aspects of the gospel which he preached, he never once offered to work a miracle to prove the truth of his own teaching, or to refute that of his opponents. It is clear, therefore, that he did not regard miracles as the necessary confirmation of his doctrines.

Portions of the Acts of the Apostles afford strong confirmatory evidence on this point. In dealing with Jews and proselytes, he is uniformly described as endeavouring to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, not by working miracles in their synagogues, but by reasonings on the Scriptures of the Old Testament. When he addressed heathen audiences, his first efforts were directed to prove the Unity and the Fatherhood of God; and he concludes by adducing the resurrection of Christ as a proof that God will render to men hereafter a righteous retribution according to their

deeds. To the elders of the Ephesian Church he describes his teaching as capable of being summed up under two heads,—repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Luke informs us that he wrought miracles both at Philippi and at Ephesus; yet in neither of his Epistles to those Churches is a single allusion to them. One miracle, and one only, is habitually appealed to by him—the Resurrection. Of this the miracles which are recorded in the early portion of the Acts were wrought in proof. Thus St. Peter addresses the Jewish council, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts iv. 10).

My general conclusion, therefore, is that the writers of the New Testament, and our Lord Himself, fully sustain the position for which I have been contending. This being so, it is the duty of the defender of Christianity to place its moral miracles, and, above all, the person of Jesus Christ, in the forefront of the Christian argument, and to assign to physical miracles a place subordinate to them. To do so is especially necessary in the present day, because this kind of miracles has ceased, and the fact of their performance more than eighteen centuries ago can only be established by a complicated historical argument; whereas the evidence afforded by the moral miracles of Christianity, instead of being diminished by lapse of time, has been greatly increased by their gradual realisation in the events of history.

Moreover, these alone are capable of satisfying that great requirement of modern thought—verification.

My argument will be based on the principles of common sense. If Christianity is Divine, we ought to be able to discern in it the clear indications of the presence of a superhuman power. If Jesus Christ really was what the writings of St. John and St. Paul affirm Him to have been, we ought to be able to discover in Him the presence and the action of forces different from those which operate in ordinary humanity. If He is the Light of the world, that light must be visible to those who seek it. If He is a living power, energising in the Church, its Governor and Head, indications must exist of that life and energy; or, to put the same idea in other words, the action of Jesus Christ in history ought to have been different from that of all other men, however great. If a Divine attractiveness dwells within Him, He ought to manifest such a power of attracting the human heart, as has been manifested by none other beside Himself. If Jesus Christ was a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human, then His entire work and teaching ought to manifest a breadth and depth possessed by no other man, and absolutely unique; in fact, His entire character, and not merely those actions that are commonly called miraculous, ought to be instinct with the presence of the Divine.

The great question, therefore, for us to consider is, Are there any such manifestations of the Divine discoverable in connection with Jesus Christ? I shall prove that on these and similar points the evidence is of no doubtful character. Present facts no less than

the unquestionable testimony of history prove that He stands on an elevation which is solitary among the sons of men. But if He be the one man who has no peer, His lonely greatness must be due to some cause different from those forces which have produced not only ordinary great men, but all great men, because such an unique effect must have a corresponding cause. If so, He must have been the manifestation of the superhuman.

Further: if I can prove that Jesus Christ has acted on history with an energy which is absolutely unique, the proof of the miraculous actions which are attributed to Him in the Gospels will be rendered easy; for it would be far more improbable that such a person did not manifest a superhuman power in the material universe, than that He performed the miracles in question. In other words, the *à priori* difficulties with which miracles are supposed to be attended will disappear, and their occurrence can be proved by the evidence which is needed to establish the ordinary facts of history. Having exhibited the proof of this portion of my subject, I shall set before the reader the all-commanding evidence on which the resurrection of Jesus Christ rests; and as far as space will allow me, I shall then endeavour to set before him some of the subordinate points of Christian evidence. Such will be my argument.

NOTE.—The limits of space which are essential to a work of this kind have rendered it necessary that I should greatly compress the evidence on which this part of our subject rests. I must therefore refer the reader who desires to see it treated with greater fulness to my first Bampton Lecture, and its two supplements, where he will see the entire evidence set before him

PART I.

THE MORAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

OUR LORD'S ASSERTIONS THAT HE IS "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" AND "THE LIGHT OF LIFE" REALISED IN THE MODERN WORLD, EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AFTER THEIR UTTERANCE.

"Again Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."—JOHN viii. 12.

THIS saying was uttered more than one thousand eight hundred and fifty years, and was recorded in this Gospel no less than one thousand seven hundred and ninety years, since. It is true that unbelievers have assigned to its composition a date from forty to seventy years later; but, whatever be its true date, it is a fact beyond all question that this Gospel, with this passage in it, was in existence one thousand seven hundred and twenty years ago. This date is amply sufficient for all the purposes of my argument.

To the contemporaries of the utterer, assuming that He was an ordinary man like ourselves, this declaration must have seemed the hardest of hard sayings, and the most presumptuous of presumptuous ones. What? For a man who for the first thirty years of his life had lived in the secluded village of Nazareth, who with his reputed father had practised the calling of the village carpenter, and whose educa-

tion had been only such as he had received in the school attached to the village synagogue, to proclaim himself to be the Light of the world, must have seemed to the ordinary Jew, full of respect for the great rabbis of his nation, an intolerable presumption. But how would the Greek or the Roman feel when this claim was announced to them? The idea that a member of a nation for whom they felt the most unmitigated contempt, a man who had never read a single work of one of the great writers of the ancient world, and who suffered the ignominious death of crucifixion by the authority of the Roman Government at the early age of thirty-three, would ever be the light of the world, would have been received by them as the hallucination of a disordered imagination. But to us, who are living more than one thousand eight hundred and fifty years after this affirmation was made, it is a question the importance of which it is impossible to overestimate. Is it a fact that this Galilean Carpenter has become the great Illuminator of the modern world; and not only so, but is He exerting in it, at this moment, that vivifying influence which, in the passage above cited, is designated "The Light of life"? If these two questions cannot but be answered in the affirmative, then nothing can be more certain than that a superhuman insight and a superhuman power must have resided in the bosom of this Galilean Carpenter; for that such a declaration should prove to be a truth one thousand eight hundred and fifty years after it was made is absolutely incredible if Jesus Christ was an ordinary man.

If a visitor at St. Paul's Cathedral will cast his eye over the northern doorway, he will see a slab of marble on which is inscribed the name of its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, with the date of his birth and death. The words which follow are of great simplicity. They are as follows: "Si monumentum requiris, circumspice," which, rendered into English, means, "If you seek his monument, look around you." Observe, the inscription says not one word about his genius, or even the grandeur of the work which he executed, but simply tells you, if you wish to form an estimate of his powers as an architect, to look around you, and contemplate his work. A similar course I ask you to pursue with respect to the affirmation of the Jewish Carpenter, that He was the "Light of the world." Do you ask me, Is it true? I reply, Look around you and behold! As a matter of fact, He is the moral and spiritual Illuminator at this present moment of all the progressive nations on earth; and all who are not walking in His light are fallen into a state of stagnation and decay. Do you ask with respect to His second affirmation, that He is the "Light of life," Do the rays of this spiritual Sun generate vitality and life in the spiritual and moral worlds? I again say, Look around you and behold! From whom, I ask, have sprung all the efforts which are made for the amelioration of mankind? Where were they before this Light of life shone on the moral and spiritual worlds? Scarcely anywhere. What have they now become? A mighty host. All this, I say, is capable of an easy verification by all those who have eyes to see or ears to hear.

The assertion we are considering was a bold one, because it removes the pretensions of Jesus Christ out of the regions of the abstract and the theoretical, and brings them to the test of fact. If we can discover in the facts of the present no clear or unmistakable signs of an illuminating and vital power issuing from His person, work, and teaching, then the utterer of this affirmation has borne false witness of Himself, and stands convicted of being an impostor. But if, on the other hand, He is, at the present moment, the source of the moral and spiritual illumination of all the progressive races of mankind, then He must have possessed a superhuman insight into the history of the future. Thus a saying which to all His contemporaries, except an inconsiderable number of disciples, must have seemed the height of fanatical presumption, and which must have taxed to the utmost the faith of His friends, is now the strongest evidence that His mission is from God, and that He Himself is a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human.

The contempt with which such an affirmation would be received by ordinary men in our Lord's day, when class prejudices were vastly stronger than they are at present, would be better estimated if we suppose some rustic, whose sole education had been in a village school, were to make his appearance in one of our first-class London congregations, and to proclaim aloud, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Imagine what would be the comments of the men of science, the lawyers, the

medical men, the merchants, the ordinary congregation, and even of the theologians, supposing such to be present. What, then, must have been the feeling excited when class prejudices were rampant? Let us now take a brief survey of the modern world, and observe the position which the Carpenter of Nazareth occupies therein.

1. If you travel through Europe and those parts of America into which European influences have penetrated, you will not travel far without seeing a temple, and not unfrequently a most costly edifice, erected to His honour; and you will find Him acknowledged as the supreme Head of a great spiritual society, of which He is both the Founder and the King. On conversing with the men you usually meet in the course of your travels, you will find the names of the great men of antiquity scarcely known, at any rate little cared for, and the influence which they exert scarcely appreciable; whereas the name of the Galilean Carpenter will be familiar to everybody, and His precepts, though imperfectly acted on by His nominal subjects, yet universally acknowledged to approve themselves to the conscience, and to have a binding force. Rome has produced a number of great politicians and great conquerors, among whom the first three emperors occupy a conspicuous place; yet the names of the second and third of these are chiefly preserved in the memory of ordinary men by the fact that Jesus Christ was born in the reign of the one, and crucified in that of the other; and the still greater name of the mighty founder of the empire is known only to a few of these millions who have heard of the

name of Jesus. The name of what Roman do you find best known at the present day? The name of that inconsiderable man Pontius Pilate, for he was in reality a very inconsiderable personage. Why is he known, while the names of his far greater countrymen are forgotten? Simply because he presided at the trial and condemned to death the Jewish Carpenter, for whose royal claims he entertained the most profound contempt. None would have been more incredulous than he if he had been told that the words, "He was crucified under Pontius Pilate," would have preserved his name in everlasting remembrance, while those of the reigning sovereigns, the lords of the then civilised world, who were deified after their death, and not unfrequently received Divine honours during their lives, had become almost forgotten. Yet such is the fact. There is no greater name known among the civilised races of mankind than the name of Jesus. Emperors and kings profess to be His subjects. The cross of infamy, the scandal of the ancient world, holds the highest place of honour in the noblest monuments of the modern world for no other reason than because He died upon it, and even a large majority of those who deny that He is the incarnate Son of God assign to Him the highest place among great men. Yet this is He of Whom His countrymen once said in scorn, "Is not this the carpenter?" Yes, He was the Carpenter, but at the same time greater than all their prophets, greater than all their kings, greater than all their conquerors, greater far than the monarch of the civilised world under whose yoke they were forced to bow.

2. Next, let us look around us on the political and social life of the modern world, and observe how they bear on them the impress of Him to Whom Pilate said in scorn, "Art thou a king, then?" and from Whom, when he heard the nature of the kingdom which He claimed, he turned with contempt,—a contempt in which every politician and philosopher, probably every educated man in the ancient world, would have heartily concurred. But how has it fared with this kingdom after the lapse of eighteen centuries of time? Has the attempt to found it been a success? The answer must be, Yes. Has century after century witnessed an extension of its domain? The answer must be, Yes. Has it exerted a powerful influence on the legislation and the politics of the past? History, with no doubtful voice, answers, Yes. Is it at this moment exerting a powerful influence on the practical life of man? I answer, Look around you and behold! Where is the legislative power in Europe or America which does not accept the principles which underlie the teaching of Jesus Christ as the basis on which society ought to rest, and at least profess to embody them in practice? Nor has the attempt been a vain one, for every institution in the modern world is more or less leavened with its principles, and is getting more and more so year by year.

Let me confirm this position by a few examples. When Pilate turned with contempt from the claims of the despised Nazarene, there were probably not less than sixty millions of slaves in his master's empire; *i.e.*, half his subjects were viewed, not as men, but as chattels, to be dealt with according to the pleasure of

their owners. But what have we lived to behold? The extinction of slavery in every Christian state but one. To whom is due this mighty change? Not to the philosophers and the moralists of the ancient world, who pronounced slavery a natural institution, but to Him Who taught that all men are brethren. Look again at the mighty empire of the reigning Cæsar, which its rulers believed would be eternal. It, and its civilisation, has passed away, and a new one has arisen, which even the bitterest foes of Christianity cannot but admit to be leavened with the principles of the teaching of Him Who, more than eighteen centuries ago, proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the world. What, moreover, is one of the chief ends to which in this our day both public and individual effort are specially directed? The answer is obvious. The elevation of the lower classes of society, and the amelioration of the condition of the wretched. In proof of this I simply say, Look around you and behold! To whom, I ask, is this due? To the rulers of the ancient world? Their care about the masses was to keep them quiet. Was it, then, due to the philosophers? They contemplated their condition with despair, and viewed the attempt to elevate them as hopeless. To whom, then, is due this mighty change? To the teaching of Him Whom His enemies still designate "The Nazarene." He has succeeded in raising a mighty army, whose function is not to kill and to destroy, but, after His own example, to go about doing good. All this the reader may easily verify for himself by perusing some approved work on Roman history from B.C. 40 to A.D. 70, and let

him mark the difference between the world which then was and the world that now is. The conclusion will be inevitable, that He of Whom His opponents once said in scorn, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" is the Light of the modern world.

There is one point to which, in all probability, exception will be taken, which it is desirable to notice before proceeding further. The teaching of Jesus Christ is pre-eminently opposed to warfare; yet it may be objected that up to this time it has produced little influence on Christian nations, and that they are nearly as ready to wage war on one another as men were in the days of darkness. The fact cannot be denied; but it is no less true that we have lived to behold the day when large numbers of the subjects of the King of peace have arrived at the conclusion that war is a most illegitimate means of settling differences between Christian nations; and the number of these is steadily increasing day by day. The time has been long, but we see now clear indications that the Christian leaven is gradually leavening the whole lump of humanity; in other respects its influence is clearly visible. Mark the distinction between ancient and modern wars: the ruthless barbarism of the one, and the comparative mildness of the other; in the one wholesale slaughter, in the other no taking of life except on the battle-field. But, still more worthy of remark, our own recollections have witnessed the institution of a society of devoted men and women whose object is impartially to minister to the sick and wounded of both contending armies. What is their banner? The cross of the Crucified One. Al.

nations possessing the Christian name have agreed to esteem this banner sacred, and that its bearer shall be held in honour. Surely, even with respect to warfare, the Light of the world is growing visible in the eastern skies.

3. Next, when we survey man in his social relations, whose teaching is it which constitutes the acknowledged rule of duty between man and man in the modern world among the progressive races of mankind? It is that of Jesus Christ. The philosophers and moralists of the ancient world laboured hard at their vocation, but it is not too much to say that the influence which is exerted on the world in which we live by Him Who in outward appearance was an uneducated carpenter vastly transcends that of the philosophers and the moralists of every age united. The principles of His teaching everywhere commend themselves to the enlightened conscience of mankind. This is admitted even by those who deny His superhuman claims. Mr. J. S. Mill gives it as his opinion that the modern sceptic could not do better than so to frame his conduct that it should meet with the approbation of Jesus Christ. But, what is more remarkable still, modern Agnostic scepticism has propounded a theory of morals, which it designates by the name of Altruism. In doing so, it has had the advantage of all the experience of the past, and of all the enlightenment of the present. What then, in simple English, is the thing hidden under this sounding name? It is neither more nor less than what Jesus Christ taught more than eighteen hundred years ago. Altruism means that each individual

man will best realise his own individual happiness by sacrificing himself for the good of others. Has not Jesus Christ taught the same? Did He not say, "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? Even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High; for He is kind toward the unthankful and the evil" (Luke vi. 32-36). Of all self-sacrificers for the good of others, without one single thought of self, He is the greatest. Let unbelief, if it is able, point out His fellow.

This being so, it may full well be asked, In what does this modern gospel, elaborated as it has been after all the experience of the past, and in the midst of the enlightenment of the present, and which its propounders affirm will supersede Christianity itself, differ from the old one? Simply in this, that, while it professes the same aim, it removes out of its teaching every atom of moral and spiritual power which is calculated to make it become a practical reality in the life of man. It affirms that you ought to sacrifice yourself for the good of others, but not for the love of God, or because He commands you so to do, for this philosophy knows of no God to love or to obey. You ought to sacrifice yourself for the good of others, but not for love of the greatest of self-sacrificers,

Jesus Christ, Who is a fable or a myth. You ought to sacrifice yourself for the good of others; but you must do so, not influenced by the expectation of realising your own happiness in a world to come, for that would be a selfish motive, too low to be recognised by our philosophy; and besides, there will be no world to come in which to realise it. All you are entitled to hope as the result of your self-sacrifice will be, that, if others follow your example, the world, many millenniums after your conscious being has been absorbed in the infinitude of things, will become regenerated; but remember that in this regenerated world you will have no share.

Such is the evangel of modern enlightenment, which is propounded by the various schools of Agnostic, Positive, and Pantheistic philosophy, when stripped of the sounding words in which it has been enunciated. Nothing can be clearer than that everything that is good in it was enunciated more than eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, by the Founder of the Christian Church. It differs from Christianity, as we have said, simply in removing from it every moral and spiritual power which is capable of rendering the sacrifice of self for the good of others a practical reality in the life of man.

What, then, is the simple fact? These various schools of so-called modern enlightenment, after all the experience of the past, have been unable to improve on the teaching of Him Who, if nothing superhuman dwelt within Him, was neither more nor less than the carpenter of a remote village, whose sole education had been that given in the school attached

to its synagogue, aided, it may be, by an occasional visit to Jerusalem. Yet He, against all probability, affirmed Himself to be the Light of the world; and He actually is the Light of the world in which we live, now more than eighteen centuries after He has been withdrawn from this earthly scene. He is now, at this moment, shining brightly as the sun in the spiritual firmament, and all other illuminators only reflect His beams. What, then, is the only possible inference from these facts? That a superhuman enlightenment and a superhuman foresight must have dwelt in Him Who in A.D. 30 said of Himself, "I am the Light of the world," and Who in A.D. 1886 is the Light of the world.

4. Let us now take a brief survey of the influence which He has exerted, and still exerts, on conversation, art, literature, and history. In the Augustan age and that which followed it those things were a subject of open conversation in educated society of which, St. Paul says, it is even a shame to speak. A perusal of their great writers will readily make the reader acquainted with that to which I refer. Their morality was gross. What is become of all this foulness? In decent society at least it is driven into the darkness from which it came. No decent writer would now venture to give a literal translation of many a classic poet. Whose teaching is it that has proclaimed all this foulness an abomination? That of the philosophers of the ancient world, or that of Jesus Christ and His apostles? Christianity has in this our day driven into darkness not a few of the indelicate expressions which we read even in the Old Testament.

How is it with respect to art,—painting, for example? Walk through some of the great picture-galleries of modern Europe, and observe who is prominently glorified therein. Unquestionably He that died on the cross of shame; and not only so, but He has thrown a halo of glory on those who have most devotedly followed Him. Of the Divine features of Him Who is depicted in the Gospels, and of the character therein attributed to Him, the greatest masters of the art have sought to give an ideal embodiment in their pictures; and many of them are the *chef-d'œuvres* of modern Europe. Everywhere you behold similar representations of His mother, His chief followers, and of those who from regard to Him loved not their lives to the death. Remove from our picture-galleries everything relating to Jesus Christ, and you would leave them half empty. Had Pilate and Caiaphas been told that the scenes with which they were connected would be thus glorified eighteen centuries after they were silent in their graves, by means of Him Whom they judicially murdered, they would have considered him that told them so to be bereft of reason.

Precisely similar is it with respect to poetry and history. If you strike out of them everything which relates to Jesus Christ, the Church which He has erected, and the influence with which He and it have acted on mankind, the whole will become a mass of fragments, without meaning or connection. I need hardly add that Christianity has created an architecture and a music of its own.

Justin Martyr, who was born during the last

quarter of the first century, at a place not far distant from our Lord's early residence, has handed down to us a tradition not unlikely to be true, that He and His reputed father were chiefly employed in making yokes for oxen and similar implements. Yet He it is Who, in the world in which we live, genius is proud to glorify; and in the light which issues from Him all races of mankind, except those who are sunk in stagnation and decay, are walking. Not a few desire to behold a miracle, and say in their hearts, if they could see one wrought before their eyes, it would resolve all their doubts. Let them open their eyes, and they will behold the greatest of miracles in the realisation in this our day of the words of Him Who, more than eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, said, "I am the Light of the world."

5. Having considered the first part of our Lord's declaration, and having proved that it is true in fact now in the nineteenth century after its utterance, let us now consider the second part of His affirmation: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

In these words our Lord not only affirms that He is the Illuminator of the world, but that He will be a life-giving power to them that follow Him.

Let us mark the difference: moral illumination and the knowledge of what is right is one thing; the ability to make that knowledge a practical reality, regulating the conduct, is a very different one. An illustration from the physical universe will make my meaning plain. The sun emits two kinds of rays: the one which cause light, and the other which cause heat,

the first are not life-giving; but the second are the agency which calls the principle of life into active energy; in a word, without their influence the world in which we live would be a wilderness destitute of life. According to this analogy, our Lord in the declaration we are considering proclaims Himself to be the Sun of the spiritual and moral world, and, as we have seen, He is the source of its illumination; He affirms that He is also the source of its vitality. "He that followeth Me," says He, "shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The all-important question, therefore, is, Is this utterance of His capable of verification in the world in which we live, now eighteen hundred and fifty years after He has ceased to be visibly present on this earthly scene? In answer to this question, I say once more, Look around you.

The most determined sceptic cannot deny that a vast amount of spiritual and moral energy is at this moment concentrated around the person of Jesus Christ. He has a vast army of self-sacrificers for the good of others actively at work. Look around you at the extent of their operations, from the missionary, labouring in remote regions, to the Sunday-school teacher, who in very numerous cases sacrifices his or her only holiday in the week to what they believe to be doing their Master's work, and on all the other agencies whose aim is to promote the regeneration of mankind which lie between these two extremes. It may be true that they have not always laboured wisely; but their labours are a patent fact. To what, then, are they due? If you ask this vast army of

labourers, Why all this self-sacrifice? why not leave the degraded to perish in their degradation? the answer will be, We are sacrificing ourselves in our respective labours from love to Him Who has sacrificed Himself for us, and because we are persuaded that we are doing His will and obeying His commandments. Of whom can this be said, either in the past or the present, except of Jesus Christ alone? He is at this moment a Divinely-attractive power, acting mightily in the spiritual and moral world. If you wish to verify this, I cannot cite a better example to enable you to do so than the Patagonian savage. Sometimes missionaries are accused of taking their ease; but I think that not even the greatest enemy of Christianity will venture to insinuate that they have visited this inhospitable region with a view to ease or comfort. Many years ago this country was visited by the celebrated Mr. Darwin. In the account of his voyage which he subsequently published, he expressed the opinion that its savage inhabitants were irreclaimably brutalised. But these savages were subsequently visited by Christian missionaries; and when Mr. Darwin read an account of the results of their operations, he candidly confessed his error, and sent a subscription to the Society. What, I ask, prompted the missionaries to undertake this apparently hopeless mission? The action of the Sun in the spiritual world, Who said that to them that followed Him He would be the Light of life. What, I ask, was the moral and spiritual force which acted on these degraded savages? The crucified Jesus. Who, again, will deny that in this our day, and in this our country, He is the means of rescuing many a de-

graded man from his degradation, and restoring him to a sound mind, or that He is not the means of elevating multitudes of imperfect, yet struggling men, to higher degrees of holiness and virtue? Whence comes this spiritual power? Not simply from the doctrines which He taught, nor from His moral precepts; but it resides in His Divinely attractive person. Where is the teacher of Altruism, or of any other similar system, who has succeeded in attracting to himself even eleven self-sacrificing followers, who are sacrificing themselves for his sake in going about doing good? Yet a vast army (who can tell their numbers?) are doing this at the present day, animated by regard for One Who, if He was a mere man like ourselves, ceased from all activity on this earthly scene more than eighteen hundred and fifty years since. This subject, however, is so important that I shall treat it more fully in the next chapter, when I shall consider the might with which He energises not only in the present, but with which He has energised in the past. Here, however, it will be sufficient to observe that it is a simple fact, the truth of which it is impossible to question, that He is still mightily energising in the moral and spiritual world, more than eighteen centuries after, in the outward guise of an uneducated village carpenter, who shortly after died the death of a slave, He uttered the words, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." This fact is so absolutely unique in the history of man, that I am justified in designating it a moral miracle, which is palpably exhibited before our eyes, and the reality of which each one of us can verify for himself.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIVINELY ATTRACTIVE POWER WHICH RESIDES IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, AND THE MIGHT WITH WHICH HE HAS ENERGISED IN HISTORY.

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." —JOHN xii. 32.

MY inquiry will be directed to the following points:—

What is there in Christianity, and in its action on history, which distinguishes it from every system which man has invented in the past or the present?

Is there anything in it which stands out by itself absolutely unique?

To these questions there is only one possible answer: Christianity stands in marked contrast to every human institution, in that its entire system, its inner life, and its sole principle of cohesion are based on the personal history of its Founder.

I ask your deep attention to this most remarkable fact. The inner life of Christianity consists neither in a body of moral precepts, nor of dogmas, nor in a ritual, nor in a system of philosophy, but in a personal history. To this the entire history of man presents nothing parallel. He has originated religions without number, and every form of political and social insti-

tution; but the inner life of not one of these is based on the person of its founder. Not to speak of religions of inferior importance, three great religions, exclusive of Christianity, are now existing in the world, and their votaries probably number between seven and eight hundred millions of the human family,—viz., Brahminism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism. Two of these have known founders, whose memories are held in deep veneration by their adherents. Yet the essential principle of each consists in a body of dogmas, and not in a personal history; and their religions would still remain complete and entire if the personal history of their founders were forgotten, as has been actually the case with Brahminism. The same is true of every other religion which has existed in the past, or which still exists in the present. But to remove the person of its Founder out of Christianity would be its destruction. Its key-stone would be removed from its arch, and its whole superstructure would collapse. No one who peruses the New Testament can doubt this.

If we take a survey of the various philosophical systems and political and social institutions which have existed in the world, we shall arrive at the same conclusion. Individuals may have founded them, but that is all. A common agreement in a number of dogmas has formed the bond of union among all the philosophic sects which have ever existed in the ancient or in the modern world. The last thing that would have occurred to the leaders of ancient or modern thought would have been to found their systems on their own personal history. So it has been with

every other political and social institution. A common end or purpose, not a personal history, has constituted the principle of their inner life.

Further: Christianity is not only a religion, but it has created a great society. What, I ask, is the principle of its cohesion? To this question there can be only one answer: The personal history of its Founder. Yet in pursuing its course it has never yet found a successful imitator. Not only is Mohammedanism a subsequent production, but a vast number of sects have sprung up within the Church, yet the bond of their unity has invariably been a doctrinal one, and never the events of an historic life.

Here then we are in the presence of a fact which is absolutely unique, and which all the forces which energise in man have failed to produce elsewhere. But for a unique fact there must be a unique cause. That cause must be that the person of Jesus Christ must possess in it an attractive power, which is possessed by none other beside Him; *i.e.*, it must be a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human.

The point of my argument is this. History proves that Jesus Christ has not only been a great man among great men, or even the greatest of great men,—this even unbelievers are willing to concede,—but that He stands at so immeasurable a height above them, that before Him it is becoming that the greatest and the holiest of men should bow. He is the one catholic man, the one ideal of humanity, for whose presence in, and action on, history none of the known forces that energise in the moral and spiritual worlds can account. What is the necessary inference from this? I answer

that, as these forces which have energised in man from the day of his appearance on this earth have failed to produce His fellow, we must be in the presence of a moral miracle.

It is all-important that we should keep carefully in mind in what this supreme greatness of Jesus Christ consists. As I have observed, it is not the mere result of His doctrinal or His moral teaching; nor is it simply because His human life constitutes an embodiment of the morality which He taught; nor is it the mere result of intellectual superiority, nor of all the causes combined which by their united action make a great man in the ordinary acceptation of the term. This mighty influence is founded on that Divine life which pervades His entire character, as it is depicted by the Evangelists, not merely in those actions of His which we designate miracles, but in every portion of it. This attractiveness culminates in one aspect of it, the perfection of self-sacrifice manifested in His life, followed by the purest exhibition of self-sacrificing love, displayed in His voluntary death. This is it which distinguishes the greatness of Jesus Christ from that of all other men, and constitutes the secret of His power.

The testimony of history to the solitary grandeur, and to the might of the influence which has been exerted by Jesus Christ, is indisputable. I cannot better state the facts which it discloses than in the words of an historian who does not accept Christianity as a Divine revelation, and whose impartiality as a witness, therefore, is above suspicion. Mr. Lecky, in the second volume of his "History of Morality from

Augustus to Charlemagne," writes as follows:—"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; and has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists. This has been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution, and fanaticism which have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration." *

Other witnesses might be easily adduced, but I think that the passage above quoted will be admitted even by unbelievers to be a correct statement of facts as they are presented to us in history. I will, therefore, proceed to examine each separate statement in detail.

1. "It was reserved for Christianity," says the historian, "to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love." That which is here designated an ideal

* Vol. ii., p. 8.

character, I need hardly say, is the character of Jesus Christ, as it is depicted in the Gospels.

This statement involves two distinct affirmations.

First, that the character of Jesus Christ has accomplished the result above referred to.

Second, that it is the only character in the history of man which has ever succeeded in doing so.

I need hardly warn the reader that the historian does not mean to affirm that it has thus affected every member of the human family, but that it has thus affected all the holiest and the best of men, who have studied it, a multitude of imperfect characters who have been powerfully attracted by it, and not a few who have been sunk in vice and degradation, who have been regenerated by it.

In this respect the action of Jesus Christ has been absolutely unique. Great men have existed in abundance, and not a few of them have been great benefactors of mankind, and to the utmost of their powers have laboured to do them good. But where is the great man, Jesus Christ alone excepted, who has been capable of exerting this influence during eighteen centuries after the termination of his earthly life, or even during an inconsiderable fraction of that period? The memory of other great men we respect and reverence, but not one of them inspires us with an impassioned love. Does Moses? does David? does Isaiah? does Socrates? does Plato? does Aristotle? Does any founder of the religions, or any of the mighty conquerors of the past? does even a self-sacrificing, venerable Howard of these modern times? In the exertion of this power Jesus Christ is abso-

lutely unique. But if He is the production of the forces which energise in the spiritual and moral world in the same manner as ordinary men are, how comes it to pass that during the long ages of the past nature has succeeded in producing only one such character? But if Jesus Christ alone has exerted this power, we must be in the presence of the superhuman.

2. "But," says the historian, "this character has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions of men," *i.e.*, its influence has not been merely temporary or local, but as wide as humanity itself.

The truth of this will not be far to seek, for it is everywhere stamped on the pages of history. The European, the Asiatic, the African, the aboriginal American, even Mr. Darwin's Patagonian savage, the degraded native of Australia and of the Polynesian Isles, notwithstanding that these races exhibit the widest divergency of intellect and character, have alike confessed its power. It has surmounted all the peculiarities of race and temperament. Men of the greatest intellect have bowed before it; men of the greatest moral elevation have been raised still higher by its influences; it has touched a chord in the hearts of the uncivilised and the savage. Its influences have burst the trammels imposed by nationality, intellectual and moral training, and social condition. It speaks as man to man.

We have had no lack of great men during the ages of the past, but every one of them has been national or local, only partially able to break through the

conditions imposed on them by their birth and their moral and intellectual environment; Jesus Christ alone has done this. What, then, is the inference? I answer that there must be something in Him which is superhuman. Is it believable that the very ideal of humanity has been produced and developed, in the midst of an atmosphere of Jewish narrowness and exclusiveness, through the sole agency of those forces by which the moral and intellectual character of mankind is generated and produced? To assert its possibility is to deny the reign of law in the spiritual and moral world. Thistles never produce figs, nor brambles grapes.

3. The next fact mentioned by the historian is, that Jesus Christ is the highest pattern of virtue that has ever been exhibited among mankind. With Mr. Lecky, as I have above observed, Mr. Mill concurs, and I think that Mr. Spencer and a multitude of eminent sceptics are of the same opinion. The immense elevation of the moral character of Jesus is therefore an indisputable fact, the truth of which the minute criticisms of an inconsiderable number of modern objectors have failed to shake. What the Baptist said of himself is true of the holiest of men,—they are not worthy to unloose the latchet of His sandals. He alone of all the moralists that have ever existed is able to say without arrogance what in others would be incredibly presumptuous,—"Not only practise what I preach, but practise what I have done. Follow thou Me."

4. But the historian draws our attention to another trait in the character of Jesus Christ, still more

singular and unique. He has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but also the highest incentive to its practice. Here, then, we are in the presence of a fact which, if true, is of the profoundest significance. Multitudes of men and women have in various degrees been patterns, though not perfect patterns, of virtue; but the whole course of history presents us with only one character Who can with justice be said to be the great motive and incentive to its practice, or, to express the same idea in other words, Who constitutes in His person and history a great moral and spiritual power. Some of the great teachers of religion and morality have, with various degrees of modesty, and frequently with deep misgivings, ventured to propound their examples for the imitation of their followers; but the idea of propounding a teacher as the mightiest moral and spiritual power which can be brought to bear on man is to be found in Christianity alone. What is more, since the attempt has been made, it has not had a single imitator.

The question of fact, therefore, becomes one of the highest importance. Has the attempt proved a success? Let us hear what Mr. Lecky says is the testimony of history. "The brief record of three short years of active life has done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists."

5. Who, with the history of the past and with the facts of the present before him, can doubt the truth of this statement? Jesus Christ, as I have already proved, has stamped His impress on the entire range of

the civilisation of the world in which we live—on its modes of thought, its legislation, its social customs, and its morality. If we survey the efforts which have been made in the history of the past for the improvement of mankind, and the self-sacrifice which those efforts have evoked, it is not too much to say, that nine-tenths of it—it would probably be more correct to say that ninety-nine hundredths of it—have been called forth by regard for Him, His person, work, and teaching. But this result has not been due to His mere teaching, great as its influence has been. It has been the result of a personal influence, seated in the record of a life. To this the entire history of Christendom bears witness. The influence of this history has stirred the minds of men to their lowest depths. I do not wish to express an opinion as to how far some of the mighty movements which affected the European nations between A.D. 600 and A.D. 1600 were real embodiments of the principles of Christianity; but it may be confidently affirmed that "the record of three short years of active life" lay at the foundation of them. It is this personal influence, brought to bear on men through the record of a life, which has rendered Him capable of acting as a power mighty to inspire devotion, love, and adoration. If His doctrines and moral teaching had not been backed by this, they would in all probability have exerted as little influence as those of the philosophers and the moralists. What mankind stand in urgent need of is, not mere precepts for the regulation of life, but a moral and spiritual power which is capable of making obedience to them a reality. This

all the moralists and philosophers have failed to discover; never once has it occurred to them even to think of placing that power in themselves. But Jesus Christ has done so. He has declared Himself worthy of every sacrifice which it is possible for man to make; and the brief record of three short years of active life has during the eighteen centuries of the past evoked an army of self-sacrificers which no man can number. Wherever Christianity exists, even in its most degraded forms, its rank and file are to be found. Where are the legions of self-sacrificers which have been evoked by the teaching of philosophers and moralists? How many have been evoked in these modern times by that phantom called "the religion of humanity," whose great moral principle is altruism, or the sacrifice of self to the idea of human nature, *i.e.*, the sum total of men and women who have ever existed in the past, or who will exist in the future, which constitute the god of this philosophy? Where is its army of self-sacrificers? It stamps on the ground, but no legions appear at its bidding.

What follows? If the brief history of three short years of active life has done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists, a Divinely attractive power must reside in the person of Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, He must be a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human.

6. One more most remarkable fact is noticed by the historian.

Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution, and fanaticism which have de-

faced the Church, "it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."

The charge which the historian makes in this passage against the Church is undoubtedly true. It has frequently become grievously corrupted. Times have been when it has been overshadowed by the gloomy cloud of priestcraft. Terribly often has it persuaded or commanded the secular arm to unsheath the sword of persecution. There have been times during the past when it might have been prophesied by the wise of this world, that it was about to perish in its corruptions, with every prospect that the prediction would prove true. In the times immediately preceding the Reformation, a heathen infidelity, united with open profligacy, stalked in its high places. Similar was it in the period prior to the first French revolution. At the period of the Reformation, the pretended Vicar of Christ was the profligate unbeliever Leo X.; a little earlier, the warrior Julius II.; before him, that monster of iniquity Alexander VI.; still earlier, that embodiment of priestcraft, striving to seat itself on the imperial throne, Boniface VIII. But it is needless to prolong the gloomy list of these days of darkness. Even in our own country, Bishop Butler informs us that in his time "it was taken for granted by many persons that Christianity was not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it was now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point among all people of discernment." I need not

refer to the terrible scenes of persecution and exterminating wars waged in its name in the past. It will be sufficient to confess that the historian's indictment against the Church at certain periods of her history is true.

But his concluding observation is no less true,—"It has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."

There is, then, a depth of meaning in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ which has transcended the actual Christianity of every age, something which soars high above the Babel of her sects. It has been the universal law of human institutions that their corruptions have resulted in their slow and gradual dissolution. Hence empires have passed away; institutions have become effete; religions have sunk into a state of decay, from which they have had no revival. But a principle of ever-renewing vitality has been seated in the bosom of Christianity, and the effect of the unveiling of the person of its Founder before the eyes of men, just as He has been depicted by the Evangelists, free from the false lineaments in which He has been enshrouded by human folly and human sin, ever has been, and ever will be, the source of a renewal of vitality to the Church which He has founded. In this respect the Church of Jesus Christ differs from every institution of acknowledged human origin. Look and behold! in the seventeenth, and in the earlier three quarters of the eighteenth century, even in this our country, its influence was apparently dying out. Who will deny that it has entered on a new state of vitality in the

nineteenth? Whence this and every other fresh outburst of vitality? I answer, In the unveiling of the person of its Founder.

Let me now ask the reader carefully to consider that each of these manifestations of a superhuman power which shone forth in the person of Jesus Christ does not stand by itself alone. Even if it did, its evidential value would be great. But this evidence, taken as a whole (and it is only the most striking portions of it that I have been able to adduce), possesses a cumulative force. I ask you, therefore, fully to estimate the weight of the whole of it taken together, centring, as it does, in the person of Jesus Christ. From Him issues not a single ray of Divine light, but a mass of rays, all converging in a common focus. Before the brightness of the light which He has emitted all other illuminations grow dim, like the stars in the presence of the sun; all other activities are feebleness. What then is the inference? There are only three choices before us:—

Jesus Christ must be either the manifestation of a superhuman power;

Or of the ordinary forces which energise in man, which have energised only this once in His production, and then ceased from their activity for evermore, having failed to produce His like during eighteen centuries of time;

Or that He is an ideal creation.

These two last alternatives I will consider in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS CHRIST NOT THE RESULT OF THE ACTION OF THOSE FORCES WHICH ENERGISE IN THE PRODUCTION OF MAN, BUT A MANIFESTATION OF A SUPER-HUMAN POWER.

"And when the Sabbath was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter?"—MARK vi. 1—3. The answer:—"I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."—JOHN viii. 42.

I WILL commence this chapter by adapting the question of our Lord's fellow-townsmen, which they not unnaturally put in their astonishment at His teaching and His mighty works, to the subject which we have been considering in the two previous chapters. I ask, therefore, Whence hath this Man all these things? And whence is the wisdom that hath been given to this Man, that it has distanced that of all philosophers and moralists united, in the powerful effects that it has produced? What means the might with which He has energised in the moral and spiritual world, during more than eighteen centuries of time? I shall prove that the only rational answer to these questions is our Lord's declaration, which I have

quoted from St. John's Gospel, "I have come forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."

I have at the conclusion of the last chapter observed that if Jesus Christ is not a manifestation of a superhuman power, He must be the production of the ordinary forces which energise in man, *i.e.*, He must be a mere man, and nothing else, or He must be an ideal creation. The first of these alternatives we will now consider.

In the first place, let me ask the reader most carefully to observe that, if Jesus Christ is a superhuman character such as He is depicted in the Gospels, this constitutes a rational answer to the above questions, and fully accounts for His mighty action in the history of the past, and in the facts of the present. But if He is a mere man, produced and developed as ordinary men are, then the facts referred to in these two chapters are incapable of any rational solution.

It may be justly asked, If Jesus Christ is a mere man, produced by the ordinary forces which energise in the moral and spiritual world, and by them alone, why is it that they have succeeded in producing only one such man during the whole course of authentic history, which extends over a period considerably in excess of five thousand years? There was no lack of great men, in the ordinary sense of these words, even in these primitive times. As the Duke of Argyll has well observed in his work, "The Unity of Nature," he who first taught men to kindle a fire and adapt it to the arts of life, he who first cultivated the wheat plant and adapted it for human food, he who

first substituted instruments of metal for those of bone and stone, and those who reduced pictorial into alphabetical writing,—all these were in their day and generation as great inventors as any in modern times, and have produced results equally, if not more, powerful on the history of man. Their inventions still continue of the utmost value, though the names of the inventors are passed into oblivion. What do the Egyptian and Assyrian monuments teach us? That no small number of men, who are commonly called great, must have existed in those early times. But the greatness of these men differs *toto cælo* from the greatness of Jesus Christ; and while their inventions still continue of the highest value, the influence which their personal history has exerted eighteen centuries after their departure from this earthly scene is *nil*. If we descend lower down the stream of history, into that of Greece and Rome, here again we find nature prolific in the production of men great in nearly every department of human life,—great as philosophers, great as moralists, great as artists, great as politicians, great as warriors; but their greatness waxes pale before that of Jesus of Nazareth, and their personal history inspires neither love nor adoration, nor possesses any attractive power.

Once more let us advance a step further, and cast a glance at the Hebrew race. Here again great men—of a greatness, it is true, of a different order—are not wanting. Surely Abraham was a man great above his day and generation; Moses was a great man; David was a great man; not a few of the prophets were great men; the Maccabees were great men,

who, by the sacrifice of their lives, rescued their religion from destruction; but every candid reader of the Old Testament will acknowledge, that the greatness of all these sinks into nothing compared with the greatness of Jesus Christ; nor does the personal history of any one of them succeed in stirring the heart of man, either civilised or savage, to its lowest depths, or act on a single human being as a regenerating power. Who will affirm that the love of Abraham, or of David, or of the Maccabees, or of any hero, or philosopher, or moralist of the ancient world, constrains him to a life of self-sacrifice for the purpose of doing good to others? All these, in the departments in which they were respectively great, may have been noble as examples, but not one of them is the centre of a moral and spiritual power. At last Jesus Christ appeared; and if He is the production of the ordinary forces which energise in the moral and spiritual world, nature must have exerted herself mightily, and produced one who is greater than all great men united—the one man by whom alone it can be said with truth, Which of you convinceth me of sin? the one alone who exerts a Divinely attractive power long centuries after he has passed away from this earthly scene. But if she has succeeded in producing this one unique man, why is it that she has never since produced anything approaching to his fellow, though she has still been prolific in the production of men ordinarily considered great? She has produced a Mahomet, she has produced a Charlemagne, she has produced a Napoleon, she has produced a Shakespeare; but she has produced no Jesus

Christ. The reason of this is obvious: He is no production of the forces which energise in her.

Again: it may be asked, Why is it that Jesus Christ is the only catholic man? I mean by a catholic man a man free from the impress of the environment in the midst of which he has been born and educated, and who is free from the impress of the peculiarities of race and nation. What are the facts with respect to all ordinary men? They invariably bear upon them the impress of that moral and spiritual atmosphere which they have habitually breathed. This is the cause of those peculiarities of national character which are handed down from generation to generation. Even great men, very great men, have been unable to free themselves from their influence. Thus Oriental philosophies and Oriental habits of thought, however much they may differ from one another, bear on them the impress of a type of thought widely different from that of the Occidental nations. So it has been with their great men. Who founded Brahminism, we know not; but certain it is that this system never could have attained a hold on the nations of the West. The same is true with Sakya Muni and Buddhism. This system bears the deep impress of that moral and spiritual atmosphere under the influence of which it was born and grew. Mahomet, however much he may have improved on the order of things as he found them, utterly failed to transcend the environments in which he was born and educated. His religion is fitted only for certain aspects of the Oriental mind, and among Occidental nations it can take no hold. So it has been with

Greece, her philosophy and civilisation. Of her great men (and she has produced many), not one of them has succeeded in exhibiting a character which is catholic. The same is true of Roman great men; the same is true of the great men of the modern world. However much they may have risen above the average level of their countrymen, they all bear on them the unmistakable impress of that moral and spiritual atmosphere in the midst of which they were born and educated.

But to this universal rule Jesus Christ is the one solitary exception. He was born and educated in a remote village of a nation pre-eminently distinguished for exclusiveness. The intensity of this exclusiveness is an unquestionable fact; for we not only learn it from the writings which compose the Christian scriptures, but it is charged on the Jewish race by every heathen writer who has had occasion to refer to them. Yet out of the bosom of this nation has emerged the one only catholic man Who has shown Himself capable of speaking to the heart of the civilised man and the savage, to the philosopher and the uneducated, and Who, in the words of Mr. Lecky, has shown Himself "capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions," and, in those of Mr. Mill, is such that a modern sceptic could not do better than so to frame his life that it might meet with the approbation of Jesus Christ.

How, then, has it come to pass that the forces which energise in the moral and spiritual world have produced this one catholic man, this Man, alone of men, Who is free from the trammels which are imposed on

other men by the moral and spiritual atmosphere in which they have been born and educated? I reply that the only rational answer is, that He is not the production of those forces, but the manifestation of a superhuman power; and that His affirmation respecting Himself is true, "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world" (John xvi. 28).

I might apply the same line of reasoning to a variety of other points in the same Divine character; but I think that these two illustrations will enable the reader to do so for himself.

Before I pass on to the next subject, I must offer a few brief remarks on the relation in which a theory, now held by a large number of eminent scientific men as affording an adequate account of the origin of all things, stands to the subject we are now considering. The reader will see that I refer to the theory commonly called the theory of evolution, of which he has doubtless heard much. This theory has been viewed by no inconsiderable number of religious men as essentially atheistic; but there is an atheistic form of it, and one which is quite consistent with a belief in theism. At the same time, while it postulates an original creative act, it excludes the Creator from any subsequent interference with His own work, which has been gradually developed into its present form by the action of blind forces, acting in conformity with invariable laws. Into the truth or falsehood of this theory of evolution it is beyond the scope of the present work to inquire. Such an investigation is the proper function of the philosopher and the

scientist. My position respecting it is, that if we assume its truths, it forms one of the strongest proofs that Jesus Christ is a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human. As far as our present argument is concerned, it will be unnecessary to do more than trace the process of evolution from the first introduction of life into the world.

According to the theistic form of this theory, the Creator originally created a few germs of the simplest forms of animal life. These He endowed with the power of producing other beings like themselves. But if He had stopped here, all living beings would have been characterised by a universal sameness, and progressive advancement would have been impossible. He, therefore, endowed these primitive germs, not only with the power of producing their like, but of doing this with certain small variations from their original type. As in process of time these beings became extremely numerous, the food-supply became deficient, and a struggle for existence took place. In this struggle the stronger (which by an euphemism in the language of this theory is called the fitter to survive) prevailed, and the weaker went to the wall. Thus things went on through periods of time, the immensity of which it is hardly possible to form a conception of. These variations—remember that the theory presupposes that they were *small ones*,—which fitted the creature to its surroundings, thus enabling it to survive, became fixed improvements in its structure. These improvements were transmitted to its descendants. These again propagated their like with slight variations. Here again, for a similar

reason, those variations, which better adapted the new being to its surroundings, survived, became permanent and transmissible; improvement after improvement followed; in due time, species grew out of species, by the gradual adaptation of the individuals composing it to their surroundings, until at last man emerged, who, as far as things have yet gone, forms the apex of the creative work; or, to express this theory in the smallest number of words, every creature which has existed in the past, or which exists in the present, has become what it is by successive adaptations of individuals to their surroundings, by means of which improvement after improvement has been effected, while beings not thus adapted have perished. All this has been effected by the action of the forces of nature in conformity with invariable law. All that the Creator effected by His direct agency was to form the original cells possessed of life, to endow them with certain properties, and to set the machine in motion. So perfectly was it constructed, that during a number of ages, past enumeration, it has ground out its results in the production of the innumerable hosts of living beings who have existed in the past and in the present, independently of any intervention on His part with its working. A few germs of life, endowed with the power of producing their like with certain small variations, acted on by the blind forces of nature, struggling with one another through boundless time, have produced everything which we see and behold. Such is this theory in very general outline.

Thus far I have described this theory only as far as

it professes to account for man's bodily structure, and such endowments as he possesses in common with the other animal races. But its propounders are not content with this, but they propound it as an adequate account of the origin and growth both of our moral and intellectual nature, and of all the distinctions which exist between man and animal and between man and man. Nay, more, man, as a political, a social, and a religious being, has been developed into what he is by precisely the same agencies. He began as a germ; and out of that germ, by the means above described, has grown the mightiest intellect, and the holiest and most self-sacrificing of men who have ever trod this earth. Such in brief is the theory which has been accepted by a very numerous body of philosophers and scientists, as affording an adequate account of the origin and the present condition of man.

As I have said above, it does not come within the limits which must be assigned to this work to discuss the truth or falsehood of this theory. It is only necessary that in passing I should warn the reader that there are several links in this long chain for the existence of which its most devoted adherents do not even profess to have been able to adduce one atom of scientific evidence. But inasmuch as it is the popular theory of the day, my duty is to consider what is its bearing on the Christian revelation, and whether it affords any rational account of the mighty influence exerted by Jesus Christ, as I have set it forth in the second and third chapters of this work.

Let us, therefore, assume, for the sake of argument,

but, as I am strongly of opinion, in defiance of the facts, that this theory is a true account of the origin of ordinary men and women, and even, what requires a still stronger draft on our faith in the teachers of this philosophy, of those individuals among them who are called great. This being so, I shall prove that, if it is so far true, it affords the strongest evidence that a superhuman power must have manifested itself in Jesus Christ.

Observe, therefore, what it is which this theory postulates. All these mighty changes during the ages of the past have been the result of an indefinite number of minute variations, by means of which the animal races, including man, have advanced in a uniform progress, from lower to higher forms of being. It would greatly aid this theory if it could be shown that nature has advanced by great leaps and bounds; but, unfortunately for it, facts are against it, and I do not think that its adherents ever have maintained that she does. Her progress, therefore, in advancing from what is low to what is high, and from higher to higher, is one which is extremely gradual. Let us, therefore, consider the conditions under which Jesus Christ was born and educated, and see whether His pre-eminent greatness, not only above His contemporaries, but above all men during all historic time, can be accounted for by any of these small variations, or whether it is not absolutely necessary to assume that a superhuman power must have manifested itself in Him.

According, then, to the theory I am combating, Jesus Christ was born a Jew, and was nurtured

and his mind developed in that atmosphere of thought and feeling which prevailed from B.C. 4 to A.D. 30. What this was we know from the Gospels, from Josephus, and from no inconsiderable number of pagan writers. These authorities are all agreed on one point, viz., that it was a state of mind of extreme narrowness and exclusiveness. According to the Gospels, the Pharisaic party, which was really the popular and national party, was to the last degree narrow, and their religion was a mass of outward formalism. The small sect of the Sadducees was a set of worldlings. So were the Herodians. As to the Essenes, they are never once referred to in the writings of the New Testament; but they constituted a sect which, with some undoubted merits, was even more extremely exclusive than the other sects of Judaism. If we turn to the pages of Josephus, we find that Herod, miscalled the Great, and his sons were half heathens, and that the influence which they exerted on Jewish society was simply corrupting. It is true that none of the heathen writers who have mentioned the Jews ever visited Judæa; but there were large numbers of Jews at Rome, and their notices of the habits and customs of the race are far more unfavourable than those which are given in the Gospels. Nor does the Talmud, the earliest part of which was written from A.D. 180 to 200, give us a more exalted idea of the Jewish atmosphere of thought and feeling during the time in question. Its teachings chiefly consist of moral hair-splitting. When we compare the state of morals as it existed in our Lord's day, and the teaching of its greatest teachers,

with the elevation of the greater prophets, we feel instinctively that it had undergone an evolution, not in a forward, but in a backward direction, bearing on it the clearest indications of decay. Yet out of a state of society of this description emerged the one catholic Man; out of extreme narrowness, He Who had not a single trait of narrowness in Him; out of a state of religious feeling of the most extreme ritualism, He Who proclaimed that the only acceptable worship was a worship rendered in spirit and in truth; and out of the intensest nationalism, He Who alone bears on Him no trait of the peculiarities of race or nation.

I ask, then, In accordance with what law of evolution has Jesus Christ been evolved out of the elements in question? If the law of progressive development is an advance by small leaps and bounds, Jesus Christ certainly proves an exception to this law, for He is separated from the noblest of His contemporaries by an interval which it is impossible to measure. It is, therefore, impossible that He could have been evolved in conformity with a theory of evolution which teaches that all progress in the direction of improvement is by a long course of small variations, which become fixed in ancestors, and are transmitted to posterity with improvements. Where is one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ who made even an approach to His greatness, or who has exerted an attractive power even a single century after his death? While their names and characters are forgotten, the influence of Jesus Christ is worldwide.

But it is repeatedly urged as an explanation of all this, that Jesus Christ was a great man, and a great

genius, which enabled him to surmount the trammels of his birth and education; but if this theory of evolution affords a true account of the origin of mankind, it is exceedingly difficult to understand how great men and great geniuses of a considerable elevation above their ancestors and their surroundings are ever produced at all. But let this pass, for I am not combating the theory, but am labouring to ascertain whether it affords any rational account of the existence of Jesus Christ. I shall, therefore, content myself with observing, that the greatness of Jesus Christ has been proved to be so high above that of all great men, that it is impossible to account for it, in conformity with any theory of evolution, as the result of the forces which energise in the moral and spiritual world.

It has also been repeatedly urged, on the authority of the Talmud, that some moral utterances of the rabbis make a near approach to those of Jesus Christ; and from this the inference has been drawn that no great interval separated the one from the other. It is true that a careful examination of the twelve folio volumes of which this work consists has succeeded in discovering a few grains of gold, embedded in a mountain of impure metal; but when we compare the Gospels with the Talmud, what is the result? While the Talmud consists of a mass of incredible trivialities, the Gospels are a mass of pure gold, without a single triviality therein. But this is not all. Let us suppose that the great Jewish rabbis were all that some modern writers have represented them to have been, and that Jesus Christ was only

a little exalted above them. If this is a true statement of the case, I ask, How has it come to pass that their fates have been so different? If these rabbis were only a little inferior to Jesus Christ, they ought to have exercised an influence on the world only a little inferior to His. But the influence which has been exerted by Him has been, and still is, worldwide, and shows the strongest signs of increase; whereas that of the rabbis is confined to the few scholars who, with labour and effort, have made themselves masters of the contents of these twelve folios, and the influence which has been exerted through their teaching on the modern Jew. In a word, Jesus Christ is the Light of the world; the rabbis are a rushlight shining in a dark corner. On the progressive races of mankind the influence they exert is *nil*, and the very names of most of them are all but forgotten. Jesus Christ, therefore, is not an improved rabbi, but stands at an immeasurable height above all rabbis, all philosophers, all legislators, all conquerors, all moralists, and all great men united. From this the inference follows, that He is not the product of those moral and spiritual forces which energise in man which act in conformity with any principle of evolution.

It would be easy to adduce a large number of specialities in the character of Jesus Christ, in addition to the above, which I have simply adduced as illustrations of this mode of reasoning, all of which lead to the same conclusion; but I think with these hints the reader will be able to do so for himself. It will, therefore, be sufficient for me to observe that the above reasonings prove the truth of the thesis placed

at the head of this chapter, That Jesus Christ is not the result of the action of those forces which energise in the production of man, but is a manifestation of a superhuman power.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNITY OF THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS A PROOF OF ITS HISTORICAL REALITY.

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables."—2 PETER i. 16.

THE most widely accepted, and, at first sight, most plausible position which is taken by modern unbelief is, that the Christ of the Gospels is an ideal creation of some kind, from which the real Jesus differed widely; and that the latter was an ordinary great man, who has been invested with a halo of superhuman glory by the enthusiasm of his followers. I shall prove in this chapter that, however plausible this position may seem when stated in general terms, yet, the moment it is subjected to a careful criticism, it crumbles into dust.

The following facts, which will form the foundation of my argument, must be admitted as true alike by believers and unbelievers.

First, the Gospels exist.

Secondly, whatever theory may be propounded respecting their origin, or the nature of their contents, they contain the portraiture of a great character, viz., that of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, that this character is composed of a multitude of parts; *i.e.*, it is the product of their conjoint contents.

Fourthly, that the parts of which it is composed constitute a unity.

Fifthly, that in our four Gospels we possess four different portraitures of the same character, the only difference being that they were delineated by their respective authors from four different points of view.

My position is, that this unity is only consistent with the portraiture having been the delineation of an historical reality, and is utterly inconsistent with all those theories of modern unbelief which affirm that the Gospels consist of a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations.

Now, as it is certain, whatever account may be propounded of the origin of the Gospels, that this portraiture exists in them, its origin must be accounted for. I ask, therefore, How did it get there?

One theory affords a rational account of its presence, and of the action of Jesus Christ in the history of the past, and on the facts of the present as stated in the preceding pages, viz., that it is the delineation of a character who actually existed, copied from the very life. This fully satisfies all the facts in question.

What, then, is the course which modern unbelievers have pursued in dealing with this subject? They affirm that by far the larger portion of the contents of our Gospels is unhistorical, *i.e.*, that they consist of a number of ideal creations, myths, and legends, innocently invented by the primitive followers of Jesus, for the purpose of glorifying their Master,

and which in process of time have been mistaken for historic facts.

Let it be observed that the various theories which have been propounded by modern unbelievers respecting the nature and origin of the Gospels have not been propounded for the purpose of accounting for the existence in them of the portraiture of Jesus Christ, but of the miraculous narrative which is so closely interwoven with their contents. My contention is, that no theory which fails to give a rational account of the origin of the portraiture can be accepted as affording a true account of the origin of the narratives, for the obvious reason that the portraiture is the conjoint effect of the narratives. This is obvious; yet, strange to say, it is a point which has been universally overlooked by those who impugn the historical character of the Gospels.

The following points connected with the portraiture render the idea that it is an ideal creation simply incredible.

1. The character of Jesus Christ, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is allowed, even by a large majority of eminent unbelievers, to be the noblest and the purest which has ever existed in fact, or has been invented by fiction.

2. It is evidently not an artificial creation, such as we meet with in ordinary historians and poets. Their characters are not the combined result of the facts which they narrate, but are palpably the artificial creations of the historians or the poets. Of this the works of Shakespeare, Lord Clarendon, and Macaulay will afford ample illustrations. The point to which I

wish to draw the reader's attention is, that their delineations of character are evidently manufactured articles.

But in the Evangelists this artificial character is absolutely wanting. Nothing can be more artless than the structure of the Gospels. It is impossible to read them without coming to the conclusion that it was not the purpose of their authors to delineate a character, but to compose a narrative which should be a record of the actions and the teaching of Jesus Christ. The creation of the character is the indirect, I may say the accidental, result of this purpose.

3. Another proof of the artless character of the Gospels is, that while there can be no doubt that their authors were penetrated with the profoundest admiration for their Master, they never once dilate on His great qualities. All that they do is to record His actions and discourses with scarcely a remark. They have even scarcely a hard word to say of His opponents, although they must have regarded the chief agents in bringing about His crucifixion as the worst of murderers. In these respects the Gospels form a striking contrast to the Epistles. Their authors are constantly bursting with admiration at His greatness, His humility, His meekness, and His self-sacrificing love; and habitually propound the perfection of His character as a subject for imitation. They even occasionally give a brief delineation of Him as a patient Sufferer. Yet, despite this absence of the smallest conscious attempt to delineate a character on the part of the authors of the Gospels, they have done so more effectually than any of the poets, the

historians, or the biographers of the past or of the present.

4. Of what, then, does the character consist? It is undoubtedly the result of the various narratives of the Gospels, placed in juxtaposition in the order in which they stand in the Evangelists. I draw attention to this fact for the purpose of showing how completely inartificial is its production. How, then, has it originated? The design of the Evangelists in composing their Gospels, as stated by two of their number (Luke i. 1—5; John xx. 30, 31), was to edify believers, and instruct them in the principles of Christianity. To effect this the Evangelists have given us four narratives of our Lord's actions and teaching; and, in doing so, they have produced a result which they evidently did not contemplate, viz., they have set before their readers the most perfect of all delineations,—that of the Christ of the Gospels.

Such are a few of the striking facts on the surface of the Gospels which are obvious to every reader. How, then, do those who impugn their historical character attempt to account for the facts?

Very briefly stated, their theory is as follows:—The historical Jesus was a very great man, who succeeded in attaching to himself a number of enthusiastic and credulous followers. These imagined him to be the Messiah of certain old predictions, and, believing that the Messiah must do such and such things, they fondly believed that Jesus actually performed them. This tendency greatly increased during the century which followed his death. Numerous ideologists invented a number of stories, which ascribed

to him a superhuman character and the possession of miraculous powers; and the credulity of the primitive believers led them to mistake these stories for the facts of his historic life. The result was that the historic Jesus became gradually metamorphosed into a mythic hero, and the real events of his life became buried under a mass of myth, legend, and ideology. In this state of things, the authors of our first three Gospels took these legendary reminiscences in hand; and out of them, with the aid of a certain number of brief documents already in existence, composed their respective Gospels, which speedily acquired such a degree of popularity among the primitive believers, that they have caused all the other legendary accounts to sink into oblivion, with the exception of those eighteen compositions which still survive, and are commonly called the spurious Gospels.* The fourth Gospel, on the other hand, is affirmed to be a deliberate forgery, the comparatively late work of some Christian bent on glorifying his master, who was deeply imbued with the principles of the Alexandrine philosophy. These theories have undergone several modifications; but what I have here stated will give the reader a general idea of their character. I must ask him also not to forget that they have been propounded for the purpose of accounting for the miraculous narrative, and not for the portraiture contained in the Gospels; but, inasmuch as the portraiture consists of the narrative, a theory which fails to give a rational account for the existence of the one must likewise fail to account for that of the other.

* Some of these are comparatively late forgeries.

According, then, to this theory of the origin of the Gospels, the portraiture of the greatest of all characters has been created by the Evangelists having placed side by side a number of fictitious narratives, the inventions of a considerable number of persons; and that their respective Gospels are a selection out of a far larger mass of legendary materials. The materials thus selected they wove together into a consistent account of our Lord's actions and teaching, without the smallest intention to delineate a character, but solely for the purpose of handing down a record of His ministry to future times. What, then, are we asked to believe? It is neither more nor less than this, that out of a selection from this mass of legendary materials, the inventions of a considerable number of ideologists, when placed side by side in the form of a connected narrative, has emerged the character of the Divine Christ, which character forms a perfect unity in all its parts; and not only so, but four different individuals have each succeeded in effecting the same result.

The reader will perhaps wonder why it is that this creation has not been ascribed to some one great genius, instead of adopting the clumsy method of invoking the aid of many minds in its production. The fact is, that this is so opposed to all the historical conditions of the case, that such a theory has not been propounded by a single unbeliever of eminence.

The character of the Christ of the Gospels is admitted even by unbelievers to be one of the greatest moral elevation. Consequently, if it be an ideal creation, and not an historical reality, it is

entitled to rank among the most perfect works of art; it is, in fact, a work of art, just as great poems, paintings, and statues are works of art. Now, these latter are never produced at haphazard, but are the creations of persons endowed with lofty genius. If, therefore, the Christ of the Gospels has resulted from the labours of a number of ideologists (which is the theory of their origin which is widely accepted by unbelievers at the present day), it follows that those who assisted at its creation must have been persons of lofty genius and moral elevation.

The application of this theory to some acknowledged work of art, be it poem, painting, or statue, will render its absurdity manifest. Let us suppose that a character which runs through the entire action of a poem forms a consistent unity; that both poem and character are admitted to belong to a high order of such compositions; and that they are the combined result of the labours of a considerable number of poets, who spontaneously delineated the different parts of which it is composed. But inasmuch as the whole is made up of its parts, it follows that a number of persons of high poetic genius, who worked without concert, must have concurred in its production; and yet that the parts, when put together, resolved themselves into a unity of conception. In a like manner, if we were asked to believe that a celebrated painting or statue originated in a similar way, it would be necessary to assume the co-existence of a body of artists, who spontaneously, and without concert, devoted themselves to the elaboration of the various parts, and that

these parts, when put together, formed a painting or a statue of high artistic merit.

A single illustration will enable the reader to appreciate the absurdity of such a position. There is in the picture-gallery of the Louvre, at Paris, a celebrated painting, called the "Marriage at Cana in Galilee." It consists of a considerable number of figures in a common grouping, all of which blend into one another, and form an harmonious unity of conception. Let us apply to this painting the theory which we are invited to accept as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the great portraiture which they contain. Assuming, then, that the picture is not the work of a single artist, but of many, each of them, in accordance with the above theory, must have spontaneously painted a number of figures, from which, when a selection had been made, and the selected figures were placed side by side, this celebrated picture was formed. Such an account of its origin is simply incredible.

Yet it is an undeniable fact that the theory which we are invited to accept as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture of their Christ, is encumbered with far greater difficulties than the above, for its fabricators, instead of being men of lofty genius and moral elevation, are, owing to the necessities of the case, affirmed to have been a body of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts. Full well may the reader ask, Why have the propounders of this theory encumbered themselves with a difficulty such as this?

The reason is that it is necessary to do so to enable them to account for the ready acceptance of the various miracles which were attributed to Jesus as actual facts of His real life, while the truth is, He performed none.

Happily, however, we are not left in doubt as to the kind of fictions which credulous mythologists invent. In the spurious Gospels above referred to we possess a number of such fictions, of which the person of our Lord forms the centre. They enable us to know for certain what was the class of actions which writers of fiction were in the habit of ascribing to Him. The incidents which they record are confined to two periods of His life, viz., His childhood and early boyhood, on which our Gospels are all but silent, and His passion and resurrection; while they omit all account of His ministry and teaching. The miracles which they attribute to Him are for the most part little better than caricatures of the Holy One of God. Instead of quoting special instances of them (they are almost too painful for quotation), I will set before the reader a brief contrast between their contents and that of the four Evangelists which I have drawn in another work.

"The case stands thus: Our Gospels present us with a picture of a glorious Christ, the mythic Gospels with that of a contemptible one. Our Gospels have invested Him with the highest conceivable form of human greatness; the mythic ones have not ascribed to Him a single action which is elevated. In our Gospels He exhibits a superhuman wisdom, in the mythic ones a nearly equal superhuman absurdity.

In our Gospels He is arrayed in all the beauty of holiness; in the mythic ones this aspect of character is entirely wanting. In our Gospels not one stain of sinfulness defiles His character; in the mythic ones the Boy Jesus is both pettish and malicious. Our Gospels exhibit to us a sublime morality; not one ray of it shines in those of the mythologists. The miracles of the one and of the other stand contrasted on every point. A similar opposition of character runs through the whole current of their thought, feeling, morality, and religion." *

Such is the kind of Christ, and such the kind of miracles, which the mythological spirit, when it has undertaken to deal with the history of Jesus Christ, has actually invented. It is deeply marked with that extravagance and want of moral dignity which is certain to result when credulity and fanaticism undertake to deal with such subjects. I now ask the reader's attention to the very important fact that the miracles which the Gospels attribute to Jesus Christ all bear a high moral impress. The reason why I do so is, that Mr. J. S. Mill, in that remarkable work his posthumous essays, has expressed the opinion that it is inconceivable that the Jesus of the three first Gospels can be an ideal creation, on the ground that His character, as therein delineated, is one which is absolutely above the conceptions of His followers, of the primitive Christians, or even of the Apostle Paul, to have invented. But while he makes this admission, he goes on to say that

* "The Jesus of the Evangelists," p. 381.

it is quite possible that His followers may have invented any number of the miracles which have been attributed to Him. Now, although Mr. Mill does not say so, I conclude that I am justified in inferring that he would include among the supernatural elements which are contained in these Gospels all our Lord's lofty affirmations respecting Himself; for if He was not conscious of an indwelling presence of the superhuman, such utterances would have been in the highest degree presumptuous, and utterly inconsistent with that moral elevation which he justly attributes to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, he affirms that the contents of the fourth Gospel, which he designates a mass of poor stuff, might have been produced in almost any quantity by His followers.

This being so, the reader will at once perceive the importance of the fact to which I have drawn attention, viz., that the moral aspect of the superhuman and the human elements in the Gospels is precisely similar. Consequently, if it is impossible to believe that the latter can have been an invention of the followers of Jesus, because His character and teaching stands at an elevation far above their conceptions, the same reason is equally applicable to the former. If, then, for the reason given by Mr. Mill, the one must be accepted as historical, so must the other. Besides, so intimate is the union of these elements in the pages of the Evangelists, that it is impossible to separate the one from the other without making the entire narrative a mass of confusion. This the reader can easily verify for himself by trying the experiment on a single Gospel. The whole question,

therefore, resolves itself into one of simple fact: Is the moral elevation of the superhuman elements of the Gospels on a level with the human ones? This again is a point which the reader can determine for himself.

I have already pointed out in general terms the absurdity in which the theory which is propounded by unbelievers respecting the origin of the Gospels, involving as it does the portraiture of the Christ which they contain, as the alternative to their historical truthfulness, is involved. Let us now take a brief view of the specific, yet overwhelming difficulties involved in their position, which for the purpose of my argument may be briefly stated as follows.

During the first century of our era a large number of legendary stories grew up around the person of Jesus Christ, which metamorphosed Him from a purely human into a superhuman character. Out of these each of the authors of our present Gospels made a selection, and wrought the selected materials into the respective narratives which we now possess, and out of the materials thus selected has emerged the threefold portraiture of the Divine Christ, each a unity in itself, and all three constituting an harmonious whole. Let it be observed that I by no means concede that the character delineated in St. John's Gospel does not form an harmonious unity with that which is delineated in the other three; but the discussion of this point would involve too lengthy a treatment to enable it to be embodied in the present work. The unity of the character delineated

in the three—a fact which is indisputable—is sufficient for all purposes of our argument.

1. The ideologists must have spontaneously concurred in delineating a set of fictitious creations, which exhibited a combination of the Divine and the human in a single personality. The problem would have been comparatively easy of solution if a single mythologist had proposed to himself to delineate either of these separate from the other; but when they are to be delineated in combination, the problem becomes a highly complicated one, as to the proportion in which these two factors are to enter into the character, and how they are to be made to shade into each other and form an harmonious unity of conception. But immeasurably greater would have been the difficulty if a number of ideologists had spontaneously elaborated a set of fictions of this description, a selection from which, when combined, was capable of creating the character in question. Yet it is a simple fact that the Christ of the Gospels does exhibit this unity, and that the Divine and the human in His character shade into each other with exquisite perfection.

2. They must also have concurred in delineating a set of fictions out of which a character could be delineated which is a most perfect manifestation of benevolence, tempered with the perfection of holiness, and which is at the same time invested with an aspect of stern severity when brought into contact with certain forms of moral evil. The reader, if he will give a moment's thought, will see that the problem here involved is a very difficult one, and one which

would have been solved in different ways by different minds. Yet it is a fact that these three characteristics unite together in the portraiture of our Lord, as it is depicted in the Evangelists with an exquisite harmony.

3. Equally unanimous must they have been in inventing stories which attributed to our Lord the highest degree of self-conscious greatness in combination with the most perfect humility. The self-assertion of the Jesus of the Evangelists, great as it is, is never obtrusive; and while He is uniformly depicted as conscious of supreme worthiness, He is invariably clothed in a garment of humility. These are traits of character the fine touches of which defy all power of imitation, yet they underlie the entire structure of the Gospels. A single ideologist would have found the delineation of this aspect of character a work of the greatest difficulty; yet, according to the theory I am controverting, not only must the numerous mythologists of primitive Christianity have been unanimous in attributing these traits of character to our Lord, but these delineations, when put together, must have formed a perfect unity of conception.

4. These ideologists must have concurred in inventing fictions which attributed to Jesus absolute unselfishness; for if we read the Gospels from one end to the other, we shall not detect in Him one selfish trait. Still, anger is not unfrequently ascribed to Him, but it is invariably aroused, not by anything terminating in self, but by an extreme form of moral obliquity. Further, this unselfishness is nowhere more strongly exhibited than in the miraculous

narratives which, according to the theory I am combating, must have been all legendary inventions.

5. Equally unanimous must they have been in inventing stories which attributed to our Lord the ideal of moral perfection; and still more remarkable is it that they must have agreed in what moral perfection ought to consist. Further, it is the almost universal tendency of mankind, and pre-eminently of the ancient world, to ascribe the highest place to the heroic and political virtues, and a lower one to those which are mild and unobtrusive. But in the Christ of the Gospels, while the heroic ones are not wanting, they are subordinated to the milder aspects of character. There again the ideologists must have unconsciously arrived at a conclusion the very opposite of which the almost unanimous opinion of the times in which they lived would have urged them to adopt.

6. The suffering Christ is a marvellous delineation. So important is the place which it occupies in the Gospels, that the account of it fills one-fifth of their contents. But, as we have seen, they attribute to the Sufferer a superhuman character. The problem, therefore, which must have presented itself to the minds of the mythologists must have been an extremely complicated one, as to how their Divine Christ was to be depicted as a sufferer. The whole current of popular thought was against them; a model to guide them, they had none; yet the portraiture of the suffering Christ is consistent throughout. No discordant trait mars its harmony. He is all submission to His Father's will; He is calm; He is

dignified in the presence of His persecutors; He is absolutely patient under the acutest sufferings, and is even represented as praying for His murderers. When He was reviled, says an apostle, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; yet if He prays to the Father, twelve legions of angels will immediately come to His rescue. His self-surrender, therefore, is depicted as purely voluntary. If it is asked how the human in the closest union with the Divine is to be depicted in suffering, the answer of the Evangelists is, the scenes at Gethsemane, before the Jewish council, before Pilate, and on the cross. Who shall describe these after them? The entire account of the Passion is a unity throughout. Its execution is so perfect, that a well-known writer, not too favourably disposed to Christianity, has put into the mouth of a fictitious character what are believed to have been his own sentiments, that if the death of Socrates was worthy of a philosopher, the Passion of Jesus, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is worthy of a God.

7. The evangelical history is set in an historical framework, *i.e.*, the Gospels contain very numerous allusions to the history, manners, customs, modes of thought, and circumstances of the times during which the events which they profess to record occurred. It is true that the correctness of some few of them have been called in question by hostile critics; yet it is beyond question that the bulk of them have been verified. Most of these references are of a very incidental character; yet every discovery in history has proved their correctness, even in those cases

which in former times have been made the subject of dispute; and the more history has been explored, the more their historical character has been vindicated. But the works of even the greatest poets and writers of fiction all concur in proving the extreme difficulty which exists in fitting a number of fictitious narratives into an historical framework, which is full of a number of minute historical allusions. In doing so even the greatest writers of fiction have committed numerous blunders. What, then, must have been the difficulties which a number of credulous mythologists would have encountered in adapting their fictitious creations to the historical framework in which the evangelical narratives are unquestionably set, and that, too, in places remote from the scenes in question! The common sense of the reader will lead him to conclude that the difficulties would not only have been great, but insuperable.

It would be easy to adduce numerous other examples of that marvellous unity of conception which pervades the character of the Christ of the Gospels; but these will be sufficient for our present purpose. I have now only to ask the reader carefully to observe how these numerous separate delineations harmoniously shade together into a single character, which constitutes an harmonious whole. If he will do so, I feel assured that he will arrive at the conclusion that this favourite theory of unbelievers for accounting for the origin of the Gospels is repugnant to common sense. As I have above observed, the theory that the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is the delineation of an historical reality satisfies alike all the conditions

of the history of the past and of the facts of the present. No other either does, or can. It is, therefore, true.

In concluding this chapter, let me ask the reader to consider what the theory which we have been examining really means. Its meaning, stripped of all disguises, is, that the mightiest power which for more than eighteen centuries has energised for good, nay more, which at this moment is the cause of an overwhelming majority of such institutions as exist in Europe and America for promoting the happiness of man, is based on a delusion. If, then, the Jesus of the Gospels is an ideal creation, and not an historical reality, then a phantom and a shadow has been the centre of a mightier power, and has exerted a mightier influence for good, than all the realities which have ever existed. If this be so, one thing is true, and one only: that man is walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain. Why, then, struggle for truth, for delusions are mightier than realities, and their influence for good has been greater than all the self-sacrifice of the wisest and the best of men? If so, all is vanity! the present life is a dream, the life to come a blank, and man's only hope—shall I not say his best hope?—is to be swallowed up in that eternal silence out of which he has come, to which he is hastening, and from which there will be no awakening. This is the alternative which we are asked to accept in exchange for our Christianity, and our belief in that God Who is the merciful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, in Whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at Whose right hand there must be pleasures for evermore.

CHAPTER V.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

"The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. And the scribe said unto Him, Of a truth, Master, Thou hast well said, that He is one; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, is much more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."—MARK xii. 29—33.

IF the superhuman character which is attributed to our Lord by the Evangelists is the creation of the over-heated imagination of His followers, then there is only one alternative, that the moral teaching which is attributed to Him in the Gospels must be that of a peasant, whose surroundings in the midst of which he was born and educated were that of Jewish narrowness and exclusiveness. Consequently, the problem which unbelievers are justly called on to solve is, how a teacher who has propounded a worldwide system of morality, and who has exerted a greater influence on mankind than that of all moral teachers combined, can have emerged out of a moral and spiritual atmosphere of this description. Here again we are entitled to ask the question, Whence hath this man all this wisdom?

Two answers have been returned to these questions.

The first is, that it is due to the exalted genius of Jesus Christ, which enabled Him to burst through the trammels which were imposed on Him by His birth and His surroundings.

The second is, that various precepts in the teaching of Jesus Christ can be found elsewhere, and, therefore, that He has accomplished nothing extraordinary.

1. With respect to the first of these solutions it will be only necessary for me to observe, that it affirms what I have proved in the previous chapters, that Jesus Christ is absolutely unique among mankind, and that He is the one only man who has thus succeeded in bursting through the limits imposed on him by his birth and his surroundings. The reader, therefore, has nothing to do but to apply the reasoning there adduced to the above position.

2. With respect to the second, that the precepts of Jesus Christ can be found elsewhere, the truth is, that a few precepts having a resemblance to some of them can be thus found. In the Talmud, as I have already observed, a few grains of gold may be found buried under huge cartloads of worthless matter. With respect to certain Oriental systems of moral teaching, such as those of Sakya Muni, Zoroaster, or Confucius, the evidence that they had at this period penetrated to the secluded town of Nazareth, or that they had even influenced Jewish thought in general, is simply *nil*. Nor even, if the above affirmation were true, does it give the smallest account of why it has come to pass, that the influence of Jesus Christ as a moral teacher has transcended that of all philosophers and moralists united.

But the objection itself involves a complete misapprehension of the point at issue. The real question is, not whether isolated precepts of Jesus Christ may be found elsewhere, but whether His system, taken as a whole, can be thus found; and whether any previous thinker has made anything like a near approach to it. The real value of a moral precept depends on the connection in which it stands, and the system of thought with which it is united. No writer of credit affirms that man cannot discover a considerable amount of moral truth without the aid of a special revelation. His ability to do so is a necessary result of his having been endowed by God with a moral nature. Hence it follows that, if the moral teaching of our Lord is a thoroughly comprehensive system of moral teaching, all such truths would find a place in it. Their doing so, therefore, by no means detracts from its originality. Nor does it follow, because reason has discovered a certain amount of moral truth, that it has discovered everything necessary for the well-being of man. But above all, the objection is founded on the assumption that the chief end and aim of Christianity is to propound a body of ethical truth, instead of what it affirms to be its great purpose, to communicate to man a great moral and spiritual power, of which he was previously destitute. The real point for our investigation, therefore, is, Are there specialities in the teaching of Christianity which all the wisdom of the ancient world was unable to discover? Does it bring to bear on man's moral being a spiritual power of sufficient force to render the moral law capable of being obeyed by man, the want of which the philo-

sophers were deeply conscious of, but which their philosophy was unable to supply?

The following are some of the chief points in which the teaching of the New Testament is most strikingly contrasted with that of all the great masters of ancient thought.

1. In its earnestness and aim.

The first thing which strikes every reader is the intense earnestness and reality of its teaching. He feels himself brought into contact with a body of teachers whose aim is not to enunciate a set of rules for the regulation of life, but to bring men into subjection to the moral law. In striking contrast to this was the teaching of the ancient moralists. Their aim was essentially intellectual, viz., to investigate the principles on which moral duty rested, and on them to erect a body of precepts for the guidance of life. Their teaching, therefore, was essentially cold, and, consequently, barren of result. We feel instinctively on reading a treatise of an ancient moralist, after studying the New Testament, that we have passed from a region of earnestness, heated to what we may not inaptly designate a white heat, into a region of thought whose striking characteristic is, not moral earnestness, but speculation.

2. The all-comprehensiveness of the Christian law of duty.

This law is based on the three following great principles.

(1) Man's duty to man as founded on, and originating in, the relation in which man stands to God.

(2) Man's duty to man measured by the regard which each man feels for himself.

(3) Man's duty to man measured and sanctioned by the obligations he is under to Jesus Christ.

The two first of these are enunciated in the passage which I have placed at the heading of this chapter. The third is the new commandment, "A new commandment give I you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

If it is urged that a precept having a near resemblance to the injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," can be found elsewhere, it is certain that the idea of basing man's duty to man on his relation to God, and of urging it, as is done throughout the New Testament, as the great inspiring motive to obedience to the moral law, never occurred to any ancient philosopher or moralist. But with respect to the new commandment, all the philosophers and moralists of the past would have scouted the idea of measuring and sanctioning the duty of one man to another by the love which they themselves had shown for others. In these two points Christianity is unique.

What, then, is embraced under these three principles? They enunciate a law of duty, co-extensive with the human family, which involves the great principle of the brotherhood of mankind, founded on the Fatherhood of God and on the love of Christ. The ancient moralists, on the contrary, never rose to the conception of duty as due to man as man; but they restricted it within the narrow bounds of citizenship, race, and social condition; and consequently they looked on the

great majority of mankind as pariahs, who stood outside the pale of obligation. It is true that in the latter Stoic philosophy, subsequent to the time of Jesus Christ, some dim conception of the universal brotherhood of mankind may be found; but it had no substantial basis on which to rest, for its underlying principle was pantheism; and it never impelled one of its professed disciples to devote his entire life to the self-sacrificing act of going about doing good. In short, ancient philosophers and moralists divorced morality from religion, as has been done by certain schools of modern thought; and thereby they deprived their precepts of all moral and spiritual power. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, has united the two, and by doing so He has strengthened the moral principle by all the sanctions which religion can impart.

3. Another contrast between the teaching of the New Testament and that of the philosophers and moralists is the relative importance it assigns to the milder virtues. As far as the latter are concerned the facts are clear. The political or heroic virtues occupy the first place in every system of ancient thought, the milder ones a place wholly subordinate; and one of them, humility,—a virtue much insisted on by Christianity,—is scarcely recognised as a virtue. Christianity, on the contrary, places the milder virtues in the forefront, quite as emphatically as philosophy did the political ones. These latter, however, are sufficiently enforced in the practice of its great teachers, whose conduct exhibits heroism of the highest type. Still, it is an undoubted fact that Christianity has reversed the order of their importance. Which, then, are

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right, the writers of the New Testament or the philosophers? The answer of these modern times is, that the former were right, and the latter wrong. There can be no doubt that if during the last four thousand years the milder virtues had occupied the place which the heroic ones have held in the public estimation, the happiness of mankind would have been increased a thousandfold.

4. The entire freedom of Christianity from all attempts at political legislation.

That such is the case is an unquestionable fact. This is one of the things which fits it to become the universal religion of mankind. The universal practice of the great philosophers and thinkers of the ancient world was precisely the reverse. With them moral questions invariably assumed a political aspect. Ethics was with them a branch of politics. Their only hope of realising these aspirations was by the creation of an ideal republic, in which men should be educated to virtue; but this republic steadily refused to come into existence at their call. Even in the Old Testament is propounded a system of political legislation, as of Divine authority, and the teaching of the prophets is not addressed to the individual conscience, but to Israel in its corporate or political capacity. But while the great Teacher professed to be the Founder of a kingdom, the abstinence in His teaching from all political and social questions is a patent fact. The one single sentence in it which can be said to bear a political aspect, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," has for ever emancipated the conscience from the control of the

state, assigning to each their respective limits, and establishing for ever the liberty of the individual.

It is a striking fact that about six hundred years after the times of Jesus Christ the religion of Mahomet commenced its career of conquest, which at one time seemed to threaten Christendom with extinction. The Koran, its Bible, not only contains an account of the religious teaching of its founder, but also a body of political legislation which it is incumbent on the true believer to accept as of Divine authority. Yet it is this body of political legislation which constitutes one of the chief rocks on which Mohammedanism is being shipwrecked before our eyes, and which from the very first unfitted it for ever becoming the religion of humanity. Sceptics may call this insight of Jesus into the reality of things genius, if they please; but it is a genius which manifests the presence of the superhuman.

5. Jesus Christ, by one single utterance, has laid deep for ever the religion of humanity.

"Woman," says He, "believe Me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 21—24).

Probably no sublimer utterance than this ever passed from the lips of man. Every ancient religion was local, and in its essence ritualistic. Judaism itself, in the midst of which our Lord was born and educated, while

its sacred books contained not a few very elevated conceptions of the Deity, formed no exception, and was adapted only for a single nation. But in this utterance He penetrated to the depths of the reality of things, and pronounced all that is national, local, and ritualistic in religion to be *in itself* utterly worthless, and the only thing which is real, and will endure for evermore, to be the worship of the spirit. Moreover, He declared the object of worship, *i.e.*, God, to be "the Father," thereby removing religion out of the region of the abstract, and investing it with a moral character; for it is to Him only as a Father that His worshippers can yield an acceptable worship. But if He is "the Father," mankind, who are His offspring, must be brethren. By this declaration He has effected what all philosophers and moralists were unable to accomplish,—the union of man's religious aspirations with his moral nature. Compare, I say, with this the modern worship of humanity and its moral aspects. Full well may all prior literature be challenged to produce an utterance even in a remote degree resembling this in the all-comprehensiveness of its grasp, or in its profound insight into the reality of things.

6. The different views taken by Jesus Christ, and by the philosophers and moralists of the ancient world, of the nature and extent of their respective missions.

The philosophers and moralists of the ancient world viewed their mission as limited to a small spiritual aristocracy. This was inevitable from their position. Their teaching was not a religion, but a philosophy; and their object was to found a school for its study,

not to institute a society whose object should be the moral regeneration of mankind. Hence it was utterly alien to their ideas to go out into the highways and hedges of humanity, and compel the degraded to come in. The reason is obvious. They felt that they had no gospel of good news for such ; but, on the contrary, they contemplated their condition with despair, and, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, they passed by on the other side, leaving the degraded to perish in their degradation. Two sentences will, I think, present in a striking light the contrast of the views of Jesus Christ and the philosophers respecting the nature and extent of their respective missions. Philosophy affirmed that its special mission was "to those of mankind who have a natural disposition and tendency towards virtue, but that it was impossible to propel the bulk of mankind towards goodness, because they have no disposition to regard a sense of shame, but fear only, nor to abstain from bad things because they are disgraceful, but only from the dread of punishment" (Aristotle, "Ethics," book x.). Jesus Christ, on the contrary, affirmed that He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" and it is a fact that multitudes of such He has rescued from their degradation.

7. The creation by Christianity of a mighty moral and spiritual power, which, while philosophy admitted the need, it confessed that it was unable to discover.

This forms the most striking contrast of all. In affirming that it contains within itself a power adequate to rescue the degraded from their degradation, and to elevate the holy to higher degrees of

holiness, Christianity is absolutely unique. This power in the language of the Christian scriptures is designated faith.

In contrast to this let me enumerate the only forces at the command of the ancient philosopher and moralist by the aid of which he could set himself to the reform of a degraded character. He could appeal to the ordinary motives to virtue, such as the love of the morally beautiful, the nobleness of self-sacrifice, or to the probability that, on the whole, a virtuous line of conduct would render a man more happy than a vicious one, though this last was a matter of individual taste, and required a relish for virtue to begin with. But what effect would such appeals have on those in whom such perceptions are wanting? To what purpose would it be to exhort a man who had entered on a downward course of vice to practise holiness because it was morally beautiful, or to practise self-sacrifice because it was noble so to do? How could such an appeal aid the man who had become the slave of his appetites and passions in liberating himself from their bonds? It is clear that if such a man can be reclaimed at all, it can only be effected by bringing some conviction to bear on his inmost spirit sufficiently powerful to revolutionise his entire character.

For the purpose of illustrating the impotence of philosophy to effect the regeneration of the morally weak or the morally degraded, let us suppose that one who was desirous of returning to the practice of virtue had consulted a philosopher as his spiritual physician, and asked him for a prescription which

would restore him to a condition of moral health; what was the only advice which he was capable of giving? Do virtuous actions, and in time you will form virtuous habits; and these will gradually form virtuous principles; and thus you will acquire the power of self-control. But if the spiritually diseased man had replied, How am I to be rendered capable of performing these virtuous actions, or how am I to restrain the violence of my passions, unless you can call into active energy some force which is capable of mastering them? no answer except a few platitudes from the philosopher's standpoint was possible. The reason of this is obvious. The philosopher was incapable of appealing to the conscience, through the medium of religious conviction; for of such conviction he himself was destitute. His prescription, therefore, would have been a mere mockery to his patient. He would doubtless have had much to say on the power of habit to reform and strengthen the character; but if he had been asked, How am I, a vicious man, surrounded with innumerable temptations, to begin to form these virtuous habits? he would have had no answer to give.

Where, then, philosophy has hopelessly failed is precisely the point where Christianity steps in. How, then, does it propose to accomplish this result? I answer, By bringing to bear on our moral being the whole force of the religious principle in man, so as to produce a profound conviction respecting the realities of moral and spiritual truth; by setting before the mind the relation in which God stands to man, and man stands to God; by producing in him a deep

feeling of responsibility and of the reality of a judgment to come; by holding up before him the person of Jesus Christ in the Divine attractiveness of His life and death, the perfect embodiment of all that is pure, holy, and lovely in God or man, as the centre of a new spiritual life; and by the promise of Divine assistance, if we seek it, to enable us to overcome the force of temptation. By doing this, it has restored to holiness multitudes of degraded men, which no man can number; and has elevated every holy man who has come under its influence to yet higher degrees of holiness.

Such are some of the chief distinctions which distinguish the teaching of Christianity from all other systems of the past or of the present. These distinctions are all sufficiently remarkable; but the last is pre-eminently so. In the language of the New Testament the regenerating power of Christianity is faith, brought to bear on man's spiritual being,—faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in the realities of a world to come. All other holy motives it accepts as helps, but these constitute the essentials of its power. Thus an apostolic writer has declared: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." But of the efficacy of faith as a moral and spiritual power, the ancient philosopher was ignorant, because he himself was destitute of all profound convictions; and what he had not himself, it was impossible that he could impart to others. He consequently despaired of the possibility of lifting up the degraded from their degradation. Modern philosophy, on the contrary, professes not to despair, but it is attempting to

elevate the degraded masses by means of a lever which is destitute of a fulcrum.

Let me now sum up the results of this and of some of the previous arguments. The philosophers, after a deep study of the moral nature of man, confessed their inability to discover any spiritual power which was capable of effecting his regeneration. Jesus Christ has acted on him mightily; and, after a lapse of more than eighteen centuries, He is still the most powerful regenerating influence which is acting on mankind. The one discussed intellectual problems; the other appealed to the conscience and the heart. The one contemplated the masses with despair, and would have viewed the idea of devoting an entire life to their elevation as the phantom of a disordered brain; the other has been the originator and the impelling motive of nearly all the efforts which for more than eighteen centuries have been made for the amelioration of mankind. The one coldly bade men to become virtuous by performing virtuous actions; the other has breathed into man's inmost spirit a power mighty to effect his spiritual regeneration. The one ignored religion as a principle to act on the conscience; the other concentrated its entire force on man's moral and spiritual nature, and placed Himself in its centre as the perfect image of Divine attractiveness. The one descanted on the duty of meditating on the abstract idea of goodness as a means of moral elevation, but pronounced it undiscoverable by the multitude; the other has set before the eyes of men an incarnation of it in His human life. The one speculated in his study on ideal

republics which never would come into existence; the other has created the Catholic Church. Nor has philosophy in these latter days, even with Jesus and His teaching as a model, succeeded better. It can reach neither the conscience nor the heart. What, then, is the only possible inference? I answer that the Galilean Peasant must have possessed a greatness above that of all the great men of the past and the present combined; that He stands in a position among them which is unique, solitary, and alone; or, in other words, that a superhuman power must have manifested itself in Him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APPARENT WEAKNESS OF THE AGENCY THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH WAS ERECTED A PROOF OF THE ENERGY WITHIN IT OF A SUPERHUMAN POWER.

St. Paul thus writes to the Corinthian Church, about A.D. 57—58: —"For behold your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose; yea, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory before God. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—1 COR. i. 26—30.

SUCH is a description of the elements of which the Corinthian Church was composed, as set forth in a letter to its members from its founder. We shall be justified in assuming that this description was equally true of the other apostolic Churches. Expressed in brief, it numbered among its members an extremely small number of the higher and the educated classes, the overwhelming majority consisting of the lower classes and of slaves. Full well might the philosopher, the politician, and the worldling have scoffed at the idea of erecting out of such materials a

great spiritual empire, which was destined to outlive the empire of the Cæsars, to subvert the existing civilisation, and to create a new one, which should bear on it the unmistakable impress of its Founder. Yet the writer of the Epistle never faltered in his conviction, that these foolish things of the world would put to shame the wise; that these weak things of the world would put to shame the things which were strong; and that these base things of the world, and the things which were despised, and which had no recognised existence in the then order of society, would put to shame all the wisdom of the philosopher and all the calculations of the politician. In the weakness of this instrumentality the apostle gloried, because the effects which it had already produced proved that there was a Divine power in the gospel which he preached, and which he felt convinced would go on conquering and to conquer in the future. We now, who live in this nineteenth century, are witnesses that his forecast has been proved to have been a true prophecy, by the witness of the facts which are patent before our eyes.

Let us, then, take a brief survey of the apparent weakness of the instrumentality which was employed in laying the foundation of the Church, and the nature of the obstacles which it had to encounter in its progress.

1. The mere fact that the Person Whom His followers proclaimed to be the King of this new society was, to all outward appearance, an uneducated Jew, who had ended His life by the most ignominious of all ignominious deaths, was alone sufficient to provoke

the contempt of the whole Gentile world. Not only was its prejudice against the Jewish race of the most extreme description, but in these days, after the cross has been held in honour, and the Crucified One glorified, for more than fifteen centuries, it is difficult to form a conception of the scandal which was associated with it during the three first centuries of our era. In the time of Jesus Christ it was the symbol of everything which was mean and pitiful. The general feeling respecting it is well set forth by the apostle. The cross was to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Gentiles foolishness. This, then, constituted the inherent weakness which lay at the foundation of the attempt in the eyes of the philosopher, of the politician, and even of the vulgar.

2. Equally contemptible, according to the views which were entertained both by Jew and Gentile, were the apostles. Several of them were fishermen; not one of the original twelve was a man of education. Their countrymen, who reverenced their deeply learned rabbis, designated them "unlearned and ignorant men;" the Gentile viewed them as on a par with that low-class Jew who was the subject of his unspeakable contempt.

But St. Paul, who did more than all the other apostles to erect the Church among the Gentiles, was a man of a different order. He had received the best education a Jew could get, equal to that of their great rabbis; and, owing to his early life having been passed in a city which boasted of a high form of Greek culture, he was not ignorant of Gentile habits of thought, and, as we learn from his writings and

recorded utterances, he had at least some slight acquaintance with Grecian literature. Yet, as he himself tells us, he laboured under great disadvantages. His bodily presence conveyed the idea of weakness; his health was not strong; he had what he calls a stake in the flesh, commonly supposed to have been a complaint in the eyes, which greatly distressed him; and he was but an indifferent public speaker. Besides, his rabbinical lore, however much it might have commended him to Jewish audiences, would have been entirely thrown away among Gentile ones. Throughout his writings, he habitually speaks of himself as a display of personal weakness; but he declares that he glories in it, because it proved that a superhuman power manifested itself in the gospel which he preached. Such was the apostle. He was assisted in his labours by a body of from ten to twelve companions, mostly of Jewish origin; of whose position in society, with the exception of Luke, who was a physician, we know nothing. On these devolved the duty of laying the foundation of the Church in the Gentile world.

3. Besides these, as we learn from St. Paul, out of those who, prior to His crucifixion, had accepted Jesus either as a prophet or the Christ, more than five hundred men and women still continued to adhere to Him, believed in His resurrection, and accepted Him as a spiritual Messiah, the King of the kingdom of heaven. Of the rank in life of these we are not informed; but the Gospels lead us to believe that, with two exceptions, they belonged to that class of persons of whom the Pharisees of the Jewish Council spake with contempt; "This multitude which knoweth

not the law are accursed." They were certainly all Jews, or circumcised proselytes.

Such was the composition of that spiritual army which received the command to go and make disciples of all nations, *i.e.*, to go into all the earth, lay everywhere deep the foundations of a new spiritual community, to be designated the Church or Kingdom of God; to proclaim the crucified Jesus to be its King; and to summon all men to enrol themselves as its members. To the outward eye, the forces employed, compared with the end to be accomplished, must have seemed more than contemptible. This will more strongly appear when we consider the nature of the opposition which had to be encountered and overcome.

Respecting the nature of the opposition which the founders of this new Kingdom were certain to encounter from Jews of every description little need be said. It and its laws were opposed to all their sentiments and prejudices, humbled their pride, and ran counter to all their Messianic expectations. Still further, its success would have jeoparded the position of all their then ruling powers. It was certain, therefore, that the Jew would meet this scheme with the most determined opposition, and would exert every means which he possessed to crush it. Yet, as we learn from St. James, the six hundred men and women who formed the primitive society had, in the course of twenty-eight years, grown into a community which numbered many "*ten thousands*" of believing Jews.

No less determined, though of a different kind, was

the opposition which had to be encountered by St. Paul and his companions in laying the foundations of the kingdom of God in the Roman empire.

1. The philosophers and the literary class, in the words of Gibbon, looked on all religions as equally false; *i.e.*, while they were quite ready to show an outward conformity to the state of things in which they lived, and treat them with respect, they, with few exceptions, utterly disbelieved in their truth,—a disbelief which extended to all religions in general. Besides this, between Christianity and the philosophy and literature of the age there was scarcely a point in common. The simple truth is, Christianity was offensive to the pride of the entire class. With what contempt, therefore, would such persons receive the summons of one whom they viewed as a contemptible Jew to enrol themselves as members of this new society, of which, as they understood the matter, a crucified malefactor was the king!

2. Still more hostile was the politician to what he considered a most dangerous innovation. In the words of Gibbon, "he thought all religions equally useful." Religion was viewed by the politician of the Roman empire as a pure engine of state, very useful for keeping the ignorant multitude in order. Thus, in the days of the old republic, a magistrate, by simply announcing that he was taking the auspices, could dissolve a popular assembly which was convened for the purpose of passing a law of which he disapproved. This fact gives us some idea of the superstition of the times, and of the uses to which the popular religion might be applied by a cunning politician. The highest

magistrates of the old republic were, in a sense, priests, *i.e.*, they were qualified to perform religious rites. Under the imperial government the supreme pontiff was the emperor himself; but so entirely was religion viewed as an engine of state, that it was quite possible that both he and the subordinate ministers of religion might be unbelievers, even atheists; in fact, the management of religion was considered to be one of the most important pieces of statecraft. Consequently, the politician considered it his bounden duty to resist to the utmost every attempt to subvert the religions which were recognised by the state.

3. But by the politician and the magistrate there was great danger that the preaching of the gospel would be viewed as an act of treason. One of the chief themes of the apostolic preachers was the erection of a kingdom, which they designated the kingdom of God, and the proclamation of one Jesus as its king. But of nothing was the Roman government more jealous than the institution of any kind of unauthorised society, and of any kind of claim to kingship; and the distinction between a temporal and a spiritual king it was hardly possible to make the ordinary magistrate to understand. Hence he was prone to suspect the proclamation in question as a veiled treason against the existing order of things. Of this feeling we know that the opponents of Christianity at Thessalonica took advantage, laying it to the charge of the missionaries that they were acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, and affirming that there was "another king, one Jesus,"—a charge which was viewed as so serious, that the brethren immediately sent off Paul by night to Berea.

4. Further: the attempt to introduce a new religion was always contrary to the laws of Rome. Those laws were tolerant enough of all national religions. Hence they gave a contemptuous tolerance to Judaism; but Christianity, as soon as it separated from Judaism, was no longer a national religion, and therefore it ceased to be a lawful form of worship. But it went farther than this in opposition to all existing ideas; for it was not only a new religion, but it denounced all the old ones, and exhorted their adherents to forsake them and join the Church. Its proselyting spirit, therefore, made the politician and the magistrate view it as subversive of the foundation of the existing order of things, and aroused against it their strongest indignation.

5. But it was equally offensive to the vulgar. As Gibbon says, this class of society "viewed all religions as equally true." They, therefore, deeply resented the conduct of a sect which made a determined attack on every one of them. What a fanatic mob can perpetrate when their passions are aroused against a religious party, the experience of the last five centuries tells us in no doubtful terms. But they had a still more solid reason than fanaticism for their hatred of the new sect. Nearly all the popular amusements, such as the various public games, sports, and the gladiatorial shows, to which the vulgar were intensely addicted, and which were provided for them gratuitously, were intimately bound up with the religious rites of heathenism. Against all these the Christian protested by absenting himself; and in the show of wild beasts he only appeared in

company with a number of degraded criminals, as a victim to be torn in pieces by them for the gratification of the brutal mob: hence the cry on every public calamity, "The Christians to the lions!"

6. But further: the profession of Christianity not a little interfered with the ordinary intercourse of society. Feasts, such as we may call dinner-parties, were, for the most part, accompanied by what the Christian viewed as acts of idolatry, and against such he felt himself bound to protest, or else to refuse to be present. So it was in several other departments of social life. We need scarcely wonder, therefore, if the vulgar viewed the new religion with intense aversion, got up all kinds of infamous charges against its professors, and denounced them as enemies of the human race.

When, then, our Lord gave commandment to His small band of adherents to proclaim Him throughout the Roman empire as the King of a new spiritual kingdom, and to summon everyone to become His subject, they must have felt that in obeying His commands they would have to encounter the opposition of every existing power, including the philosopher, the statesman, the priest, the lover of ease, the indifferent, and the vulgar. Full well might they have exclaimed, "What are we, few in number, despised, destitute alike of power, influence, and learning, that we should undertake to encounter the opposition of every power which exists?"

But the apostle, after the success which during twenty-seven years had attended the efforts of this feeble instrumentality, recognised in it the presence

of a superhuman power. What, then, had been the results which it had accomplished during this brief interval of time? A Church whose members might be counted by "myriads" (St. James says to Paul that the Christian Jews consisted of many *μυρίοι*, *i.e.*, ten thousands) had been established in Judæa, Samaria, and the neighbouring regions. Within less than ten years after the Crucifixion a powerful Christian community had been established at Antioch, the capital of Syria. From thence Paul and his assistant missionaries set out with the purpose of conquering the heathen world for Christ; and in the course of twenty-five years they founded Christian communities in the following places, viz., Cyprus, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Perga, in several other places in the adjacent provinces, Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, Troas, Thessalonica, Beræa, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, in several places in the province of which it was the capital, in Ephesus, and in at least seven or eight important places in Asia Minor. On his journey to Rome he found a Church already established at Puteoli, and, on his arrival, a still larger Christian community at Rome. This Church was so numerous a body, that a pagan historian very unfriendly to Christianity tells us that about seven years later, it consisted of an "ingens multitudo," *i.e.*, a huge multitude. Various efforts have been made by unfriendly critics to explain this assertion away; but it stands plainly written in his description of the Neronian persecution. In the meantime, doubtless, the other Christian missionaries were not inactive; but, unfortunately, the Acts of the Apostles

furnishes us with no account of their labours or their results.

The results, then, which had been effected by twenty-seven years of work produced in the apostle a firm conviction that a Divine power was present and energising in the midst of this feeble instrumentality. In its feebleness, and in the might of the opposition which it encountered, he gloried, as affording an indisputable evidence of the indwelling in it of the Divine. Had he been able to survey the state of things two hundred and sixty-three years after, how greatly would his confidence have been increased; for he would have seen the despised cross supplant the eagle on the Roman standards, and a professed Christian seated on Nero's throne. Whether the conversion of Constantine was the result of conviction or of policy does not matter for the purpose of my argument. It is a fact which not even the greatest sceptic can dispute, that, by the time we are speaking of, the foolish, the base, the weak, and the despised things of the world, and even those which were so contemptible that they might be said to have no existence, despite all the opposition of the wise, the mighty, the noble, and even of the mob, had grown so powerful, that they had seated themselves on the imperial throne. All this was undeniably effected, not only without state patronage, but in despite of its powerful opposition; and the religion of the crucified Jesus has gone on conquering and to conquer, until it has become the chief factor in the civilisation of the modern world.

What, then, is our conclusion? After this brief

survey we may confidently affirm, to use the words of the apostle, "The power of Christ has been made perfect in weakness." The weakness of the instrumentality, and the greatness of the results which it has accomplished, prove that the promise with which our Lord encouraged the feeble band of missionaries to go forth in conformity with His commands, to make disciples of all nations, and enrol them as members of His kingdom, and which alone enabled them successfully to do so, viz., "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," was fully realised, and constitutes the only explanation of their success.

PART II.

THE MIRACULOUS ATTESTATION OF CHRISTIANITY; ITS NATURE AND EVIDENCE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS TO THE GOSPELS AND TO THE FACTS RECORDED IN THEM.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—1 THESS. v. 21.

MANY modern writers have attempted to make short work with the Christian argument by endeavouring to prove that miracles are impossible; or, if not impossible, that their improbability is so great as to discredit every narrative which affirms their actual performance as unhistorical. Around these positions a voluminous controversy has arisen; but it is not my intention to attempt to conduct the reader through its intricate mazes. I readily admit that, if there is no God, or if that which is called God is an impersonal force, or a power so inscrutable by man, that respecting its character nothing can be known, then a miracle, in any Christian sense of that term, is impossible. Their high degree of improbability is affirmed because as far as scientific observation has gone nature is uniform in its operations. From this it has been inferred that this uniformity of operation is so entirely in conformity with the character of its Author that He will never deviate

from it under any conceivable circumstances. But this affirmation is destitute of all evidence, and can only be affirmed as a truth by one who has entered into the council chamber, and who is able to grasp all the purposes of the Most High. On the other hand, if we consider the degraded condition in which the overwhelming majority of mankind actually are, then, if there is a God Who cares for man,—a position which the Christian argument takes for granted,—the improbability of some special interference of God in man's favour, and consequently the improbability of miracles, becomes reversed, and is converted into a strong probability in their favour. But we need not have recourse to abstract reasonings; for if Jesus Christ was such as I have proved Him to have been in the six preceding chapters, then the fact that God has interfered in man's favour is firmly established; and it is far more probable that such acts as we designate miracles were performed by Him than that He wrought none. This being so, a miracle may be proved by the same evidence as a well-attested fact. Further, it is necessary that a miracle should be a very unusual occurrence; for unless it were so, it would be valueless as an attestation of a revelation.

As long as the Christian argument was supposed to rest, as its main support, on a miraculous testimony vouchsafed to it more than eighteen hundred years since, it was necessary to adduce evidence of the actual performance of the miracles by which Christianity was attested amounting to nothing short of a moral demonstration. This is the line of argument pursued in the great work of Paley, and by those

numerous writers who have adopted his principles. Its main stress lies in the following proposition :—

"That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be the original witnesses of the Christian miracles passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief in those accounts, and that they also submitted from the same motives to new rules of conduct."

To this must be added the following proposition :—

"That there is not satisfactory evidence that persons pretending to be witnesses of other similar miracles have acted in a similar manner in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief in those accounts."

This argument is of overwhelming force against the position so generally accepted by the unbelief of the last century, that the original propagators of Christianity were cunning impostors; but modern unbelief has abandoned this position as untenable, and has substituted for it the affirmation that the supernatural elements in the Gospels are due to the enthusiastic desire of the primitive followers of Jesus to glorify their Master, and to various forms of mental hallucination to which they were subject. As Paley's great work was designed to meet a wholly different position, we, therefore, need not wonder that in several respects it fails to be an efficient reply to their objections.

But the difficulty which this argument presents to the ordinary reader is, that it involves several historical investigations of a very complicated character, the results of which can be only adequately appreciated by those who have made such subjects a special study.

for which those who are engaged in the active duties of life have neither time nor opportunity. They are, therefore, compelled to rest their faith on the affirmations of supposed experts; and when they discover that these are far from unanimous, they become involved in perplexity and doubt. Hence it is necessary to have recourse to a more simple line of argument. Before doing so, however, for the purpose of making my meaning clear, I will adduce two of these complicated investigations as examples:—

1. On the assumption that the attestation of miracles is the mainstay of the Christian argument, it becomes necessary to prove that our Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear, and that they were eyewitnesses of the facts which they record; or else, that they had the means of ascertaining their truth from those who were. The proof of this involves a careful investigation of the writings of the early Fathers. Here the investigator, in conducting this inquiry, encounters the very serious difficulty that none of these early writers mention either of our Gospels by name; and, consequently, it becomes necessary to prove that these writers actually quoted from them. This, however, can only be established to a high degree of probability, because, although their references to our Lord's teaching and actions are numerous, yet the passages referred to as quotations present considerable variations from the corresponding passages in the Gospels. This leaves it open to objectors to affirm that they form no sufficient proof of the point in question. Whether this be so or not has been made the subject

of a voluminous controversy, respecting the merits of which a reader not learned in historical investigations cannot be an adequate judge.

2. On the same principle, it becomes necessary to prove that the original witnesses of the Christian miracles were competent to distinguish between occurrences which are really supernatural and those which, owing to their ignorance, had only the appearance of being so, and also the incompetency of all other testimony to prove the reality of the miracles which it reports. The first of these points is pre-eminently necessary at the present day, because there is a numerous class of events which were once considered to be undoubtedly miraculous which are now known to have been brought about by the ordinary forces of nature. But the second is no less so, because not only does the Church of Rome profess to have received a miraculous attestation up to the present time, but the number of occurrences which have been alleged to be miraculous is legion; and it must be admitted that the attestation on which some of these rest, if we rely on attestation only, apart from all other considerations, is strong, and the belief of those who have affirmed their reality unquestionable. Among these are the wonders which at the present day are alleged to be wrought by spiritualistic influences, which, although those who believe in them affirm that they are the result of the action of occult natural forces, yet it is impossible, if they are realities, for ordinary people to distinguish between them and true miracles. Yet their reality has been affirmed, not only by two eminent men of science, but

also by a considerable number of men of highly cultivated intellects. The reader, therefore, will readily perceive that to prove that the miracles wrought in attestation of Judaism and Christianity are the only true miracles, and that all other alleged miracles are false, involves a very complicated course of historical reasoning.

I will now, therefore, address myself to the more simple line of argument, which I feel confident will conduct us to the same conclusion as the more complicated one, and which will possess the additional advantage, that the reader will be able to verify its several steps for himself, without the necessity of entering on a number of complicated investigations. Let me, therefore, clearly state the points which are necessary to be proved.

1. That it is impossible that between the years A.D. 30 and A.D. 180 a mass of ideal, mythic, or legendary matter should have been invented which not only superseded the real facts of the history of Jesus and caused them to sink into oblivion, but which metamorphosed a purely human Jesus into the Divine Christ of our present Gospels.

2. That the Church was reconstituted within a very brief interval after the Crucifixion, on the belief that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, and that it is impossible that this belief could have originated in a set of imaginary appearances which were mistaken for realities; but that the only rational account of the facts is, that these alleged appearances were real appearances of the risen Jesus. This last point I shall consider in a subsequent chapter.

The reader will perceive that in adopting this course I shall avoid the necessity of entering on the complicated historical arguments above referred to. It will also become apparent that the proof of the canon, and even that the Gospels were composed by the persons whose names they bear,—however important both are in a theological point of view,—are not essential to the proof that Christianity is a Divine revelation. My duty in this work is to set forth the Christian argument in its utmost simplicity, and, therefore, to disencumber it of everything which is not essential to its validity.

I have already proved, from the unity of the character of the Christ of the Gospels, that it is impossible that it can be any kind of ideal, mythic, or legendary creation. I now propose to arrive at the same result by an entirely independent line of evidence, viz., one which is purely historical. I take for the starting-point of my argument the year A.D. 180, from which I shall advance upwards to the date of the crucifixion. My reason for adopting A.D. 180 as my starting-point is, that at that time it is allowed by every unbeliever who regards his literary reputation, that our present Gospels were accepted by the entire Church as the only valid account of the life and teaching of its Founder. What, therefore, no one disputes, it is unnecessary for me to prove. All that is requisite for me to do is, to establish the fact that the accounts of our Lord's teaching and actions, as they are embodied in these Gospels, are for all practical purposes similar to those which were published to the world by His primitive followers. If

this point can be established, there will be no room for the fabrication of those legendary amplifications by which unbelievers affirm that a purely human Jesus has been metamorphosed into a Divine Christ.

The universal acceptance of the four Gospels in A.D. 180 as alone authoritative, and the fact that they had superseded all other accounts of our Lord's ministry, whether written or oral, prove beyond all question that they must have been composed several years earlier. Literary productions in days when every manuscript had to be copied by the hand, took several years to get into general circulation, except under very special circumstances; and it must not be forgotten that the difficulty of their general acceptance was increased by the fact that some of these Churches were separated by hundreds of miles from one another. Their general recognition, therefore, must have been a work of time, and their supersession of all other accounts of our Lord's actions and teaching—for we know from the preface to St. Luke's Gospel that such existed—and their acceptance as alone authentic, must have required a still longer interval. The reader will think that my demand is moderate if I ask thirty years for that purpose, but if he think otherwise I will content myself with twenty. This will bring us to the years 150 and 160 respectively; or to within one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty years from the date of the crucifixion, prior to which dates the supposed legendary matter in our Gospels must have been invented.

I will now take a step considerably in advance, which will bring us within eighty-five years after

the termination of our Lord's ministry, and within about twenty years from the death of St. Peter and St. Paul. I allude to the writings of Justin Martyr, which exceed in bulk all the remains of Christian literature previous to his time, and which contain very numerous references to the actions and teaching of our Lord. Assuming that his writings were composed at latest from A.D. 145 to A.D. 150, and that his historical recollection was good for thirty years earlier, his testimony becomes valid for the beliefs of the Church, from A.D. 115 to A.D. 110. Besides, Justin, according to his own testimony, was no ordinary convert, for prior to his embracing Christianity he had made careful inquiry into various philosophical systems, and found them unsatisfactory. This renders it certain that he did not embrace Christianity without making similar inquiries into the facts on which it rested.

One thing the testimony of Justin places beyond dispute, viz., that he derived his information not merely from oral traditions handed down in the Church, but from written documents of some kind, which he designates "Memoirs of the Apostles and their Companions," and, occasionally, "Gospels." These, he tells us, were publicly read in the Christian assemblies. It is evident, therefore, that they could not have attained to this distinction, unless they had been published for some considerable time, and their contents had been in general conformity with the accepted traditions of the Church respecting our Lord's actions and teaching. Were, then, these "Memoirs of the Apostles and their Companions" our

four Gospels? His description exactly tallies with them, two of them being ascribed to apostles, and two to their companions. Still, although the evidence before us renders it in the highest degree probable that they were our Gospels, yet it is impossible to affirm with an assurance which amounts to an actual certainty that they were the documents which Justin refers to. The reason of this is, that the passages in Justin's writings which are alleged to be citations from the Gospels are inexact quotations. This being so, it leaves it open to the inference that they may have been derived from other Gospels then in existence, or from the numerous memoranda mentioned by St. Luke in the preface to his Gospel.

This being so, it will be desirable that I should here offer a very brief general observation on the inaccuracy of the quotations of the earlier Christian writers. Their citations from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which they unquestionably used, are equally inaccurate as the alleged quotations from the Gospels. The reason of this is obvious. They were compelled either to cite from memory, or to unroll a manuscript which contained neither paragraphs, stops, nor separations between the words, and which was usually written in capital letters. This involved a considerable expenditure of time in finding the desired passage. Hence they usually cited from memory. The reader will find a similar inexactness in the quotations in the New Testament from the Old, the apostolic writers for the most part quoting the general sense and not the *ipsissima verba* of the passage referred to. I mention this

because unbelievers are in the habit of making a very exaggerated use of this inexactness of quotation.

Still, I admit that the evidence which the writings of Justin Martyr furnish, strong as it is, does not prove to an absolute certainty that the passages in question are beyond all reasonable doubt quotations from our Gospels. Happily the proof of this is wholly unnecessary for the validity of the Christian argument. But one thing his writings prove to an actual demonstration, viz., that whatever these Memoirs were, be they few or be they many, they did not differ in any important particular in the accounts which they gave of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ from those contained in our four Evangelists, the important point in reference to our argument being, that they must have contained a miraculous narrative, and a portraiture of a superhuman Christ.

As this is a point of pre-eminent importance, I must endeavour to place its force clearly before the reader; for its full appreciation will save us from the necessity of entering on a number of complicated historical investigations. The references in the writings of this Father to events in the evangelical history are at least two hundred in number; though, if a somewhat different mode of counting be adopted, they may be made still more numerous. Of these 196 are references to things which are recorded in our present Gospels; and his writings only contain four references to things which are not found therein, and these are of very inconsiderable importance. As the times of Justin were removed by a little less than a century from the close of our Lord's ministry, and as

we learn from the Evangelists that our Lord performed numerous acts, and uttered numerous discourses which they have not recorded, the wonder is that his references to events not recorded in the Gospels consist of four only. Yet such is the fact, which any reader may easily verify for himself by perusing an English translation of his writings, of which there are several.

My argument briefly stated is as follows:—If Justin did not derive his information from our Gospels, but from other writings then in circulation, it follows that those writings could have only differed from our Gospels in their accounts of the actions and teachings of our Lord, in the proportion of two to ninety-eight, or two per cent. This being so, they must have described Him as a worker of miracles, and have attributed to Him a superhuman character, only differing in the proportion of two to ninety-eight from that contained in our three first Gospels.

But I go a step further, and affirm that, if it could be proved that Justin made use of several historical documents which were not our Gospels, it would only strengthen my position. It may seem to some almost a paradox, but I would say that viewing it as a question of historical evidence, the more he made use of, the stronger it would make it. Let us suppose that his "Memoirs of the Apostles," instead of being confined to our four Evangelists, were not less than twelve in number. What would follow? The more numerous the documents which he had before him, the more certain it would be that they embodied the various forms of the traditions which were current

in the Church during the time in which he lived. To enable the reader to estimate the value of a multiform historical testimony, I will refer him to a well-known event in English history,—the murder of Thomas à Becket. The large number of the narratives of the murder puts the historian in full possession of what were the minute actual occurrences,—a knowledge which he would fail to obtain from any one single record. If the reader is desirous of fully estimating the importance of this kind of testimony, I must refer him to Stanley's "Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral," where he will find the minute details of his murder, and the value of the multiform attestation on which they rest (they being fully described in no one single narrative), fully set forth. It will help to give the reader a more lively sense of the value of the evidence which is furnished by Justin's writings, if he will reflect that the period of his historical recollections was separated from the close of our Lord's ministry by nearly the same interval which separates us from the death of the founder of Wesleyanism. If, then, the miraculous narratives in our Gospels and their superhuman Christ consist of a number of legendary stories and ideal creations, they must have been invented between A.D. 110 and A.D. 30.

The remarks which are true of Justin are equally so of all the earlier Christian writings, which are not included in the canon of the New Testament. The earliest of these, unless the brief, recently discovered document, "The Teaching of the Apostles," be an exception, is commonly called "The Epistle of

Clement," or more accurately, "A Letter written in the name of the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth," and bears date somewhere between A.D. 90—100. It contains passages closely resembling others in the Synoptic Gospels. But although the resemblances are close, it is impossible to affirm with certainty that they are quotations from them. The same remark is true of those other writers, commonly designated "the Apostolic Fathers." All that we are entitled to affirm is, that they render it highly probable that they were acquainted with one or more of our Gospels. Let it be granted, then, for the sake of argument, that these passages do not prove that their authors were acquainted with them. Still, they prove beyond all contradiction, not only that the written documents, or the traditions of our Lord's ministry with which they were acquainted, contained statements precisely similar to those in the Evangelists; but that the number of the other incidents or sayings, not included in them, which they accepted as genuine, were very inconsiderable. These considerations, therefore, prove that a body of traditions closely resembling those contained in our Gospels, must have been accepted by the Church, either in a written or an oral form, during the last twenty years of the first century; or, in other words, that they were separated from the events in question by a period of only fifty years. The legends, therefore, of which the Gospels are alleged to be composed, and which are affirmed at the time of their composition to have superseded the true history of Jesus, must have been invented, and the metamorphosis of a human

Jesus into a Divine Christ must have been effected during this interval of time. This period I shall be able to cover over by the strongest of historical evidence, viz., the testimony of the Epistles of St. Paul.

Before, however, I enter on this part of the subject, it will be desirable that I should draw the reader's attention to the necessity which the early Christian communities were under, of preserving in vivid recollection the chief events of our Lord's life, and the important points of His teaching.

The facts of Christianity are not like the ordinary facts of history. They differ from them in this, that not only do they form the foundation on which the Church was erected, but that a constant preservation of the knowledge of them is a necessary condition of its continued existence; they form, in fact, the sole principle of its cohesion as a society, and the mainspring of the religious life of its individual members. In this respect the Church differs from every human institution, in that it has not only been founded by Jesus Christ, but has been built on Him, He being at the same time its foundation and chief corner-stone. The case stands thus: the facts of its Founder's life first brought the Church into being; an acquaintance with them was essential to its growth; and if they could be proved to be fabulous inventions, its destruction would be inevitable. This is the result of its unique position, in being alone of all the institutions in the world founded on the person of its Founder, which involves an acquaintance with the facts of His historic life.

Observe further: the Church has been always under the necessity of making converts. Unless it had been thus enlarged the century which gave it birth must have witnessed its extinction. But how were converts to be made? Obviously the only way of doing so was by persuading them that Jesus was the Christ. To effect this, two things were necessary: First, to explain to the proposed convert the idea which was intended to be conveyed by "the Christ;" and, secondly, to set before him such facts in the history of Jesus as were sufficient to prove that he was the Christ. This involved, therefore, the necessity of keeping such facts in vivid recollection. This was no less necessary for the edification of its individual members.

These considerations, therefore, make it certain that the knowledge of the chief events in our Lord's ministry must have been handed down in the living recollections of the individual members of the Church in a stream of unbroken tradition; and it is immaterial for our present argument whether this was effected by the aid of written documents, by oral tradition, or by a union of both. The importance of this fact, of which so little account is made in our ordinary evidential treatises, can hardly be overestimated.

Assuming these positions to be firmly established, the following conclusions necessarily result from them. It would have been in the highest degree difficult, not to say impossible, during the seventy years which separate our Lord's ministry from the end of the first century, and even for a very con-

siderable time after, to have imposed on any community of Christians a mass of legendary matter of a character wholly different from those facts, on the belief of which their Church was originally founded; which had formed the mainspring of the daily life of its individual members; and which not a few of them had accepted as the ground of their conversion. Besides, in those days, Christians were living in a constant state of antagonism with their Jewish and Pagan neighbours. This rendered it necessary for them to justify the grounds on which they had abandoned their former beliefs, and had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. This could only be done by retaining the chief events of His life in lively recollection. If a narrative wholly different in character had been attempted to be imposed on one of these communities, its members would naturally have exclaimed, This is an entirely different account of things from that on which our faith has always been founded; we never heard of this before. Nor, as far as we know, have they ever been heard of by the members of the other numerous Churches.

But in addition to these considerations, the whole interval of time lies within the period of the most genuine and lively historical recollection. Not a few of those who had witnessed our Lord's ministry must have been living in A.D. 70, and several ten, and a few twenty years later. As long as these survived, how was it possible for a set of legends to take the place of the true events of our Lord's history? and if a set of fictions actually did so, it must have been the original reporters who invented them. But all that

they could have done would have been, to impart a little extra halo to the real facts, unless they were deliberate impostors, which is not pretended. But historical testimony at second hand is in all its main features reliable. Facts which have been reported to us by competent witnesses, who are fifty or sixty years older than ourselves, we receive without hesitation as true. Who among those who are now living, who have conversed with persons who were present at the battle of Trafalgar, and heard from them descriptions of its chief incidents, would not be competent to hand down the events of that battle with sufficient accuracy to the next generation? While they lived, it would be impossible to substitute a legendary account for the true one. The attempt to do so has in a well-known instance, in a still earlier battle, proved a distinguished failure. Between A.D. 70 and A.D. 130, abundance of this kind of testimony respecting the events of our Lord's ministry must have been available, rendering it impossible that during that interval, and for several years after, a set of fictions could have taken the place of the great facts of His historic life.

But I have in reserve a still stronger testimony, that of the Pauline Epistles, to the consideration of the value of which as historical documents I will address myself in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NATURE AND VALUE OF ST. PAUL'S WRITINGS AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS.

"I thank Him that enabled me, even Jesus Christ our Lord, for that He hath counted me faithful, appointing me to His service, that I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." —1 TIM. i. 12, 13.

I HAVE proved in the last chapter that the writings of the Fathers who flourished during the first eighty years of the second century afford incontestable evidence that at the commencement of that century the Church was in possession of a body of traditions respecting the actions and teaching of its Founder, substantially the same as those contained in our three first Gospels; that the Church was in a most favourable position for, nay under the necessity of, transmitting a true account of His actions and teaching; that the writings of the apostolic Fathers prove that a similar account was current in the Church during the last twenty years of the first century; and, consequently, that no legendary matter which was invented later than A.D. 90 has been incorporated into these pages. This leaves a period of from fifty to sixty years, which intervenes between the patristic testimony above referred to, and the termination of our Lord's ministry, to be covered by additional evidence, before we can

affirm, as an actual certainty, that our Gospels are, for all practical purposes, accurate embodiments of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ, as it was handed down by such of His primitive followers as were eye-witnesses of His ministry. For this purpose I now invoke the Epistles of St. Paul, only observing that the entire period of the patristic testimony lies well within the time during which the most eminent modern writers are of opinion that traditionary reminiscences, although they may not be absolutely trustworthy for minor details, may be safely relied on as furnishing sufficiently accurate accounts of all the great facts of ordinary history. This being so, how much more reliable must they be for the great facts of our Lord's ministry as handed down in the different communities of Christians, under the circumstances which I have described in the last chapter.

The inconsiderable use which evidential writers have hitherto made of these epistles as historical documents (for they are historical documents of the highest order) may full well excite our surprise. Hitherto they have been looked upon as a portion of the position to be defended, instead of one of the most important elements in the defence. This has arisen partly from their having been viewed as the chief source of doctrinal theology; and partly from the supposed necessity of proving the canonical authority of the different books of the New Testament as an essential portion of the defence of Christianity. However it may have happened, it is certain that their value as historical documents has been greatly overlooked; and consequently it has

been found necessary to adopt long and circuitous methods to establish facts, of the truth of which they furnish the strongest possible evidence. As the student, however, may not have been accustomed to view these epistles as historical documents, before I set before him the points which they prove I must explain their value as such.

1. Nearly all the educated unbelievers of Europe, who have studied this question, fully admit the genuineness and authenticity of the four most important of these epistles, viz., the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans and to the Galatians, even while they deny that of nearly every other writing in the New Testament. What, therefore, unbelievers admit, we need not prove. Let it be observed, then, that in these four writings we are not only in possession of compositions of the most active missionary if primitive Christianity, but of documents which were written within twenty-eight years of the crucifixion, and which, consequently, have all the value of contemporaneous testimony.

To these must be added four other letters, which, although some sceptical writers have endeavoured to throw doubt on their authenticity, are yet admitted to have been written by St. Paul by the greater part even of unbelievers, viz., the two to the Thessalonians, that to Philemon, and to the Philippians. The objections urged against them are of a very trifling character, arising chiefly from the presence of expressions and forms of thought which are alleged to be un-Pauline. But if the reader will study them

for himself, I feel convinced that he will rise from their perusal with the firmest conviction that all four bear the unmistakable impress of the same mind which composed the Epistles to the Corinthians and the Galatians. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians bring us to within from twenty-three to twenty-four years after the termination of our Lord's ministry.

With respect to the other writings of the New Testament, although their genuineness is denied by the majority of unbelieving critics, with the singular exception of the Book of Revelation, which is accepted by them as genuine, doubtless because they think that they can discover in it indications of an antagonism between St. Paul and the Jewish apostles; yet their value in an historical point of view is very considerable. Their antiquity is indisputable, and they furnish unquestionable evidence respecting the opinions of those sections of the Church, in furtherance of the views of those in whose interests they are alleged to have been composed. Thus the Epistle of St. James is an unquestionable representation of the opinions which were entertained by Jewish Christianity; and, as is alleged by unbelievers, the first of St. Peter of the Christianity of compromise. Their testimony, therefore, is of considerable value as a corroboration of St. Paul's statements.

I will now point out the value of these epistles as historical documents.

Respecting the value of original letters, as far as they contain allusions to contemporaneous events, and especially when these writers were active agents in them, I need not enlarge, for it is a thing agreed

upon by all writers of history. This is especially the case when the allusions are incidental. The writer in such cases is almost invariably off his guard, and we thus get at the real facts, which in formal histories too frequently receive a colouring in conformity with the prejudices of the historian. The discovery of letters of this kind has, in many cases in this our day, had the effect of putting in a wholly different light the history of past events, as they have been treated by prejudiced historians. No letters abound with these incidental references to an equal extent with the Epistles of St. Paul.

2. They present us with a vivid picture of the entire man in all the various alternations of his feelings. They therefore place his sincerity beyond the possibility of question. The indications of this are stamped on every page. We have him before us in his hopes and in his disappointments; when contending with opponents, and when pouring out his whole soul to friends. Probably no four letters exist in literature which afford us so intimate a view of the character of their writer as the four great Epistles of this apostle. By their aid we can reconstruct the entire man. Not only do they set before us incontestable evidence of the sincerity of the writer, but they let us into the innermost secrets of his heart. All these traits impart to his testimony the highest value as historical evidence, by affording as strong a guarantee of its truth as if we were able to place him in the witness-box, and subject him to a rigid cross-examination.

3. No less decisive is the testimony which they

bear to the calmness of his judgment. This is the more important, because it has been affirmed that his enthusiastic temperament rendered his judgment untrustworthy, especially in matters connected with the supernatural. That the apostle was enthusiastic none will dispute; but his enthusiasm was under the control of one of the calmest of judgments. In proof of this I must ask the reader carefully to peruse the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he discusses the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, and lays down rules for their exercise in this Church. Here is precisely a state of things where we might expect enthusiasm would run riot; but mark his sound sense in the directions which he gives for their regulation. I question whether there is another person to be found in history who considered himself, and those to whom he wrote, to be the subjects of influences which both he and they were firmly convinced to be supernatural, who would have written such directions, and have discussed the subject in the manner in which it is here done by the apostle.

4. Closely allied to this calmness of judgment is his wide spirit of toleration. Enthusiasts are rarely tolerant, but the apostle was tolerant to a degree in which the Church during long ages has failed to imitate him. As a striking example of this I must refer the reader to the directions which he gives in this Epistle, and in that to the Romans, as to the forbearance which enlightened Christians ought to exhibit towards the conscientious scruples of weaker brethren. The consciences of various

members of these Churches were troubled with doubts as to the lawfulness of eating certain kinds of food, and the duty of observing certain days. St. Paul gives his apostolical decision that the points at issue were utterly indifferent under the Christian dispensation; yet with a singular comprehensiveness he directs that the scruples of those who were unable to accept his judgment on these matters were to be respected. Such a spirit of toleration is without example among claimants of a Divine commission, whether they be enthusiasts or impostors.

5. The presence, in these epistles, of a large number of incidental allusions imparts to them a value as materials for history, such as is possessed by few similar documents. Their incidental form possesses this peculiar advantage. They prove not only that the writer was firmly persuaded of the truth of the facts to which he refers, but also that those to whom he writes entertained a similar opinion. A careful perusal of these epistles cannot fail to convince the reader that there were a large number of underlying facts respecting our Lord's person, actions, and teaching, which the writer and those to whom he wrote accepted in common as veritable realities. In this point of view, the Epistle to the Romans possesses the highest historical value, because this Church derived its Christianity from sources which were independent of St. Paul, nor had he ever visited it. Yet he takes it for granted that its members accepted, as the groundwork of their Christianity, the same substratum of facts as those that had been founded by himself. Consequently, the missionaries by whom this Church was founded

must have accepted the same facts; or, in other words, they formed the foundation of the Christianity of the entire Church.

6. But still more important is the following fact: These epistles make it clear that in these Churches the apostle had not only a body of devoted friends, but also a number of determined opponents. Not only were the Corinthian and Galatian Churches divided into parties strongly opposed to one another, but one of them went the length of denying the validity of St. Paul's apostolic commission. So formidable was this party in the Galatian Church that they had succeeded in persuading a very considerable number of his converts to embrace the principles of Jewish Christianity in opposition to his own. These letters afford the strongest proof of the vehemence of the controversy; yet they were intended to be read in the presence of the very persons who denied St. Paul's apostolical commission, whom he denounces in the strongest terms, and whom he again and again challenges to come forward and refute his positions.

This alone is sufficient to place these epistles in the highest rank as historical documents. It proves, whenever they contain allusions to facts, and above all when these allusions are incidental, that their truth must have been accepted alike by the apostle and by his opponents; for to have alluded in this manner to facts which he knew that those to whom he was writing were ignorant of, or did not believe in, or the truth of which he was aware that his opponents would call in question, would, in a controversy of this

kind, have involved an act of folly which is simply incredible. This peculiar feature, therefore, affords such a guarantee that the facts alluded to were accepted as true, both by the writer and his correspondents, as is probably furnished by no other writings in existence. I fully allow that it does not prove the truth of the facts themselves, but it renders it certain that they were accepted as true by all parties in the Church, including the opponents of the apostle. But these were Judaising Christians. Consequently, their testimony carries with it that of the Church at Jerusalem; and proves that the facts thus held in common by St. Paul and his opponents must have been those which formed the basis on which the Church was reconstructed immediately after the crucifixion of its Founder.

Let us now take note that these epistles furnish us with evidence which is actually contemporary, and observe the briefness of the interval which separates it from the termination of our Lord's ministry.

1. The Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon must have been written before the end of the year 62, and, therefore, within thirty-two years of the crucifixion.

2. The four great epistles must have been written in A.D. 57-58, and therefore within twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of the same event.

The two to the Thessalonians were written, at latest, A.D. 54, or at the brief interval of twenty-four years after the termination of our Lord's ministry. It will give the reader a more lively apprehension

of the shortness of the interval which elapsed between the composition of these epistles and the crucifixion, if I observe that it is precisely the same interval which separates us from the commencement of the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the Battle of Bull's Run respectively; of all which the recollections of those who are fifty years of age must be fresh.

From these considerations it follows that, if the Churches, at the time when these epistles were written, accepted an account of our Lord's ministry and teaching which, in its great outlines, was substantially the same as that recorded in the Gospels, then it is impossible that they can consist of a mass of legendary and ideal delineations, which were invented between A.D. 54 and A.D. 30; or, if the genuineness of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians is disputed, between A.D. 58 and A.D. 30.

But, as I have observed above, the interval between A.D. 58 and A.D. 30 is one which lies within the most distinct historical recollections of all those who are upwards of fifty years of age. Is it possible, I ask, that during the lives of these a Gospel which consisted of a mass of ideal and legendary inventions could have been accepted in the Churches as a genuine account of our Lord's actions and ministry, and that it had superseded the true account of His human life? This is simply incredible. It follows, therefore, if during this brief period a purely human Jesus has been metamorphosed into a Divine Christ, that the ideal and legendary matter by means of which this has been effected must have been the invention of His

primitive followers. This alternative I will examine in a subsequent chapter. Before doing so, I will offer a few brief observations more as to the value of St. Paul's testimony.

No one who reads his epistles will, I think, doubt that he was a firm believer in the reality of the facts which he definitely affirms or incidentally alludes to. It is not easy to ascertain his precise age. St. Luke describes him as a young man at the time of Stephen's martyrdom; but this may denote any age under thirty. He designates himself "an aged man" in A.D. 62; but it is quite possible that, owing to his labours and sufferings, he might have become prematurely old. We may be safe, however, in concluding that he could not be less than fifty-seven or fifty-eight years of age at the time in question. This being so, his vivid historical recollections would not only extend up to A.D. 30, the date of the crucifixion, but considerably beyond the entire period of our Lord's ministry. It is uncertain whether he ever saw our Lord in the flesh; but there can be no doubt that he must have settled at Jerusalem very shortly after A.D. 30, *i.e.*, at a time when multitudes in whose society he moved must both have seen our Lord and have been well acquainted with the true facts of His earthly life. It is, therefore, simply incredible that St. Paul should have been ignorant of them. I am aware that it has been urged, without the smallest reason, that after his conversion he was careless of all inquiry into the truth of the alleged facts, and that he easily accepted them on trust. But those who allege this forget that, prior to this event,

he himself informs us, that "he persecuted the Church of God, and made havoc of it." It is, therefore, simply incredible that, in his capacity of a persecutor, he did not ascertain from the Christians whom he persecuted the chief facts on which what he considered this great heresy was founded.

I conclude, therefore, that the facts which St. Paul accepted when he became a Christian were in all their chief features the same as those which were accepted by Christ's primitive followers, who reconstructed the Church after the crucifixion. This being so, I have succeeded in proving that no legendary or ideal elements of any real importance can have been palmed off on the various Christian Churches between this date and A.D. 180; still less that a mass of such stories can not only have taken the place of the real facts of the life of Jesus, but have succeeded in consigning them to oblivion. We read in the Epistle to the Galatians of "another gospel," which the apostle vehemently denounced. This gospel, however, consisted not of facts, but of false doctrines. Is it credible that he would not have denounced with equal vehemence a gospel which consisted of a mass of legends, if attempted to be palmed off on the Churches?

CHAPTER IX.

THE POINTS RESPECTING PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY WHICH THE PAULINE EPISTLES PROVE TO HAVE BEEN UNQUESTIONABLE FACTS.

"So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by an epistle of ours."—2 THESS. ii. 15.

HAVING pointed out that St. Paul's epistles constitute historical documents of the highest order, I must now set before the reader the chief points of which they furnish unquestionable proof.

I. They prove that within twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, and if the two to the Thessalonians be Paul's, of which few critics will entertain a doubt, within twenty-four years after that event, a highly superhuman character was ascribed to Him Who was then accepted as the Christ by the various Churches. I have advisedly used the words "highly superhuman," because it is no function of the Christian advocate to define the precise degree of the Divine which the Christians of these times attributed to our Lord. It will be sufficient to say that these epistles make it evident that it was one which was extremely elevated. The passages which prove this are far too numerous to quote. I shall, therefore,

only refer to the Epistle to the Romans,—a Church which St. Paul had neither founded nor visited, as proving beyond all question that the Jesus Who was believed in by that Church as the Christ, was viewed by them as possessing a character intrinsically Divine. The apostle thus writes:—

"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be the Lord of both dead and living" (Rom. xiv. 6-9).

The object of the apostle in writing this passage was not to formulate a doctrine, but to regulate practice. At this time a great controversy existed in the Church between Christians of Jewish and Gentile origin respecting the duty of observing particular days, and the lawfulness of eating certain kinds of food. St. Paul propounds, as the solution of the entire difficulty, Christ's supreme lordship over the Church, and over each individual member of it. Each Christian was bound to act with a sense of that lordship continually in his mind; and neither to live nor to die to himself, but to Christ. It is evident, therefore, that the apostle was firmly persuaded that the Christians at Rome accepted this lordship of Christ as the great guid

ing principle of the Christian life; for if they had not, the appeal to it, as conclusive on the point at issue, would have been nugatory. It follows, therefore, that the Christ accepted by this Church was one to Whom the individual Christian was bound to live and die, and in Whom his entire affections were to centre. What, I ask, can God demand more?

From these considerations four inferences follow.

(1) That within twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, the Jesus Who was believed in by this Church as the Christ was held to possess a character highly superhuman.

(2) That this belief was of no recent growth, but, as is proved by the place which it holds in the epistle, it must have been one of many years' standing.

(3) That the entire Church had long accepted the resurrection of Jesus as an unquestionable fact.

(4) That the Church must have been in possession of an account of our Lord's actions and teaching which rendered Him worthy of this supreme regard.

II. That the Christ Who was accepted by these Churches differed from every philosopher and prophet of the past, in being both the bond of union which united these Churches into societies, and the centre of the religious and moral life of its individual members; in a word, He was the subject of their supreme regards. This is proved by passages far too numerous to quote; I may say, by the entire structure of every one of these epistles. Further, as the foundation of every one of the Churches was

a living Christ (for it would have been impossible to have erected a society on a dead one), it follows that those who reconstructed the original community after the crucifixion must have proclaimed the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. This belief, therefore, in the resurrection, must have originated within a very brief interval after the crucifixion.

III. These epistles afford unequivocal evidence that the preaching of Jesus Christ acted as a mighty regenerative influence on the spiritual and moral world. Its degradation was extreme; yet considerable numbers of those whom the apostle addressed had been rescued by it from the lowest depths of pagan vice, and had been elevated by their reception of Christianity to a life of purity and holiness. The reality and the greatness of the change could not only be verified in its actual results, but also in the inward consciousness of those who had experienced it. Out of the many passages in these letters I will cite one only. In addressing the Corinthians, the apostle appeals thus to their own experience: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you*: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). Can any doubt that the apostle is here confidently calling on those to whom he wrote to

bear witness to a great reality, which is equivalent to a moral miracle? Neither philosopher nor moralist would have believed its performance possible, yet such a power was inherent in the gospel which he proclaimed.

IV. With respect to miracles. It has been objected that St. Paul has never once referred to a miracle wrought by our Lord. To this it would be a sufficient reply that none of the subjects which are treated of in these epistles suggest such a reference. But the objection is not strictly true; for there is one miracle which he has referred to again and again, viz., His resurrection from the dead. Besides, the Christ of these epistles is in the highest degree superhuman. If, therefore, the objection is urged for the purpose of insinuating that St. Paul was not acquainted with any miracles performed by our Lord during His earthly ministry, it is futile; for it is incredible that he could have believed that the superhuman Christ of his epistles, Who was then working mighty miracles in the moral and spiritual worlds, and Who crowned His ministry by rising from the dead, made no superhuman manifestation of Himself while on earth.

But the apostle has referred in three places to miracles wrought by himself. The first is a very incidental one, in the Epistle to the Romans. "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I

have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. xv. 18, 19).

The second is addressed to opponents: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (1 Cor. xii. 12). This passage, with its context, makes it clear that the apostle fully calculated that those to whom he wrote were firmly persuaded that he had wrought miracles among them.

The next allusion is brief, but it is incidental, and in a passage highly controversial. "He, therefore, that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii. 5). The person here alluded to is evidently himself.

These passages prove that the power of working miracles was believed to be inherent in the apostolic office, and, therefore, they establish the fact that the other apostles were believed to have been in the habit of performing them. Further, as it is incredible that St. Paul can have believed that he and the other apostles possessed a power of which their Master was destitute, it follows that the attribution of miraculous actions to Jesus cannot have been due to the growth of a legendary spirit in the Church; but, on the contrary, that the belief that He was in the habit of working them must have been coeval with His ministry.

V. These letters further prove that St. Paul, and the Churches to whom he wrote, including his personal opponents, concurred in believing that not a few of their members were in possession of certain superhuman endowments of so singular a character

as to be without a parallel in the history of miraculous pretensions. The apostle's allusions to them are frequent, but regard for space renders it impossible that I should discuss them here. I must, therefore, content myself with asking the reader carefully to study the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. This will enable him to appreciate their general character. According to an enumeration three times repeated, in this Church they were nine in number, two of which only in the present day we should designate a power of working miracles, the remaining seven being described as supernatural mental endowments.

The apostle's description of two of them is extremely minute, and affords proof of the objective reality of the manifestation of some very extraordinary phenomena in these Churches, whatever opinion we may form of their character and origin. The mode in which he treats the subject proves that, if some points about these gifts are obscure to us, the whole matter was well understood by the Churches to whom he wrote, and that they were accepted by them, and even by his opponents, as unquestionable realities. No less certain is it that the writer of these letters was firmly persuaded that he himself possessed several of these gifts, and that he had the power of conferring them on others. Thus he writes, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift" (Rom. i. 11).

Consequently, these epistles afford undeniable evidence that miraculous powers were believed to reside

in the Church within twenty-seven years of the crucifixion; and the circumstances of the case prove that this belief was not one of recent growth. Further: we learn from the Epistle to the Corinthians that the power of working miracles was esteemed to be one of the signs of an apostle. This carries the evidence that miraculous powers were believed to be possessed by certain officers in the Church up to within a very brief period after the close of our Lord's ministry. It is evident, therefore, that such beliefs could not have been the result of legendary inventions or ideal creations, all of which require considerable intervals of time before they can be mistaken for realities. I fully admit that these facts, taken alone and apart from other considerations, do not prove that these apparent miraculous manifestations were of superhuman origin; but they go a great way to establish that they were so. One thing, however, they prove beyond question, viz., that both Jesus and His followers believed themselves to be possessed of superhuman powers, and consequently that the belief that they performed miracles is no legendary after-growth in primitive Christianity, but was coeval with its birth. This being so, the inference is inevitable that Jesus Himself must have professed to have performed them; for it is incredible that the apostles could have believed that He had invested them with a power which He Himself had not. Consequently, if they were unreal, it leaves us in the presence of only two alternatives: either Jesus, Who on the confession of unbelievers was the greatest of the sons of men, must have laboured under some kind of mental hallucination; or—with

reverence be it spoken—while He Himself was the sternest denouncer of hypocrisy, He must have concurred in the perpetration of a fraud.

VI. These epistles furnish the strongest evidence that an account of our Lord's ministry, closely analogous to that contained in our present Gospels, was carefully preserved in the Church—it matters not for our argument whether it was in a written or oral form—and that it formed the substratum of its teaching. If this position can be established, it proves that all those various theories respecting the origin of the Gospels, which affirm that a large portion of the materials of which they consist are the production of a legendary spirit, are invalid.

The direct references are few. It will be sufficient for me to point out to the reader where he can find them, and he can then judge for himself what is their evidential value. Rom. i. 3, 4 contains a direct reference to our Lord's Davidic origin and Divine sonship, and also to His resurrection; 1 Cor. xi. 23-34 contains an account of the institution of the Holy Communion, bearing the closest analogy to that contained in our Gospels. It is also of the highest value, because it presupposes that the Church was in possession of an account of the passion substantially the same as that contained in them.

1 Cor. xv. 1-10 proves that the Gospel which St. Paul was in the habit of preaching was based on the historic facts of our Lord's life. Such is certainly the basis of the Synoptics, if not of the fourth Gospel. The two last references are also important, as proving that St. Paul was in the habit of solemnly committing

to the Churches which he founded certain historical facts as the basis of their faith.

Numerous passages in these epistles contain moral teaching closely analogous to that which in the Synoptic Gospels is attributed to our Lord. I must ask the reader to compare the two together, and I feel assured that he will rise from the comparison convinced that the one is the counterpart of the other three. Thus the Sermon on the Mount and the lessons of the parables are practically reproduced in the moral teaching of the epistles. On a few special occasions in the Epistles to the Corinthians a direct reference is made to our Lord's teaching, as, for example, in 1 Cor. vii. and viii. But of all the writings in the New Testament, the resemblance is closest in the Epistle of St. James, amounting to almost a direct reference.

Such are the direct references; but the indirect ones are extremely numerous, and prove beyond the power of contradiction that the apostle and those to whom he wrote were thoroughly acquainted with an account of the actions and teaching of our Lord, which they accepted as the basis of their common Christianity. As I have already observed, indirect references are far more valuable in an historical point of view than direct ones. Thus, whenever one man urges a truth on another for the purpose of producing a practical influence on his conduct, he must do one of two things, viz., he must either endeavour to prove it, or he must take it for granted that the person whom he exhorts is already persuaded of it. To illustrate my position by an example. If a man attempts to exhort another to the practice of virtue on the ground that it would

be conducive to his highest happiness, common sense suggests that, unless the person we exhort admits the truth of our principle, we must endeavour to convince him that it is so. Now, these epistles prove beyond dispute that the very numerous incidental references to a Christology which they contain are made for the purpose of exerting a powerful influence on the conduct of those to whom they are addressed. No less certain is it that their Christology is that of a superhuman Christ. But the writer never once endeavours to give a formal proof that the Christ accepted in common by him and the Churches was a superhuman one. He always takes it for granted that He was accepted as such by those to whom he writes. Otherwise his exhortations by a Christ, in Whom those whom he was addressing did not believe, would have been powerless, if not absurd. Now, references to a Christ Who clearly bears a superhuman character are found in nearly every page of these epistles. What, I ask, does this prove as a positive certainty? That the Christ Who was accepted by these primitive societies was a superhuman Christ. Of this these numerous incidental references furnish stronger evidence than if the apostle had formulated his Christology in a formal creed; which, let it be observed, he has nowhere done.

The apostle again and again informs us that the essence of his preaching consisted in a proclamation that Jesus was the Christ, and that this was addressed to men ignorant of Christianity. What does this imply? That his teaching contained such an account of the actions of Jesus as was adequate to prove that

He was the Christ. Otherwise it would have been unintelligible.

The same result follows from the oft-repeated reference to the knowledge of Christ as synonymous with Christianity itself. Such a knowledge implies an acquaintance with an extensive body of facts respecting His life and actions. But this knowledge is described as one which was highly influential on the heart and character. From this it follows that it must have consisted of a number of facts which exhibited Jesus in a light which would render Him capable of exerting such an influence. Such a delineation we possess in our Gospels. Consequently the facts referred to by the apostle as constituting this knowledge must have formed a portraiture of our Lord closely analogous to that which they contain. Further, one effect of this knowledge was to kindle toward Him a spirit of devoted love. But love can only be inspired by the presence of a lovely object. The delineation of Jesus which was accepted by these Churches must, therefore, have depicted Him as an object capable of exciting a devoted love. Here again its identification in general outline with the Christ of the Gospels is complete.

These epistles also contain another set of indirect references, which prove that the persons to whom they are addressed must not only have had a general acquaintance with the actions of our Lord, but such a one as formed a vivid delineation of His character. I allude to those numerous passages in which Christians are exhorted to make Him the subject of their imitation. These exhortations prove that the writer was fully

persuaded that those whom he was addressing were in possession of such a minute account of our Lord's actions as would enable them to use Him as a model for imitation. I adduce a few of them:—

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14).

"As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. ii. 6).

"Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). This passage proves that the Christians at Corinth had the means of instituting a comparison between St. Paul's conduct and that of Christ; and contains a direction only to imitate his conduct in so far as it coincided with that of the latter.

"For Christ also pleased not Himself" (Rom. xv. 3). The Church, therefore, must have been in possession of an account of our Lord's actions which depicted Him as a self-sacrifice.

"Now, the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another, according to Christ Jesus" (Rom. xv. 5). The Church of Rome, therefore, must have been in possession of such a body of facts respecting our Lord as rendered Him capable of exerting this influence.

"As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27)—*i.e.*, they had a sufficient knowledge of the character of Christ to enable them to make it a subject for their imitation; and in baptism they had actually pledged themselves to do so. So also Gal. iv. 19, "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ," *i.e.*, His character, "be formed in you."

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). This proves that the Corinthians were well acquainted with an account of our Lord's actions which described Him as once rich, but as leading a life of poverty, in order that others might become rich in spiritual things.

"Now I, Paul, myself, intreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 1). The Corinthians, therefore, must have been in possession of an account of the actions of Christ which presented Him in the aspect of gentleness and meekness. I need not say that such is the Christ of the Gospels.

"Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord" (1 Thess. i. 6). This renders it certain that the members of this Church had such knowledge of the character of our Lord that they could make it a subject of imitation.

"For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy . . . who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every Church" (1 Cor. iv. 17). What did the apostle mean when he spoke of Timothy's bringing this Church into remembrance of his ways in Christ? He calls the Corinthians to witness that he had not preached himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. It follows, therefore, that they must have been in possession of details of the actions and teaching of his Master.

"Though ye should have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel. I beseech you, therefore, be ye imitators of me" (1 Cor. iv.

15, 16). This passage with its context proves that it was the acknowledged duty of Christian teachers to instruct converts in Christ, and to hold up His actions as proper subjects for imitation.

I forbear quoting two remarkable passages in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, because of the objections which have been urged against their Pauline authorship. I will, however, quote a single passage from the First Epistle of St. Peter, bearing on the same subject.

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 21-24). It is evident that the writer of this passage must have taken it for granted that those to whom he wrote were in possession of a tolerably full account of the passion.

These, and numerous other indirect references, which the careful student can easily discover for himself, afford indisputable evidence that there was an account of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ, with which these primitive believers were intimately acquainted, which bore a close analogy to that contained in our Gospels. None of these were written before A.D. 58. Consequently they could not have been used by the writers of the Epistles. They must, therefore, have derived their information from an independent source. The account must have been handed down orally, or by the aid of such memoranda

as are mentioned by St. Luke in the preface to his Gospel. However this may be, it does not affect the fact that an account of our Lord's ministry, similar in all its great outlines to that recorded in the Gospels, was accepted by the different Christian communities as the foundation of their faith, between A.D. 30 and A.D. 58. Moreover, the mode in which these allusions are made in these epistles proves that the accounts of our Lord's ministry which were then current in the different Christian communities,—that at Rome, for example,—were no recent inventions, but had been accepted as the only true ones for several years previously. This will bring us to within fifteen or twenty years of its termination, and consequently renders it certain that, whatever is the true date of the Gospels, no legendary element capable of metamorphosing a human Jesus into a Divine Christ, which was invented between A.D. 50 and the date of their publication, could have been inserted into them.

But A.D. 50 brings us to within twenty years of the close of our Lord's ministry, *i.e.*, to a period when a large mass of contemporaneous testimony was available. There must have been then living large numbers of persons who had been eye-witnesses of it. Even if the absurd supposition was true that Paul, after his conversion, did not trouble himself to make inquiries about it, yet his position as a persecutor must have compelled him to investigate its chief facts, and disprove them if he could. We learn from his First Epistle to the Corinthians that our Lord showed Himself on one occasion to above five hundred brethren at once; and that when he wrote this

Epistle (A.D. 57) the majority of these were still alive. This has seemed to some a questionable assertion; but if reference is made to the tables which show the average duration of human life, it will be found that more than half of that number ought to have been then surviving.

We are now, therefore, arrived at the period of contemporary history during which it would have been impossible to have substituted a false for the true account of the ministry of our Lord. Our Gospels, therefore, contain a true account of the actions and teaching of our Lord in all its main features, as it was reported to the primitive believers by those who had been eye-witnesses of His ministry. What do we require more? It only remains for us to consider whether it is possible that they could have been labouring under any species of mental hallucination respecting the miracles which they believed that He performed, and especially His resurrection from the dead.

Further, these epistles render it so absolutely certain that the Church, shortly after the crucifixion, was reconstructed on the belief that Jesus verily rose from the dead, that it will be unnecessary that I should quote passages in formal proof of it. This leaves us only three alternatives:—

1. That Jesus Christ verily rose from the dead;

2. Or that the belief that He did so was due to some mental hallucination on the part of His followers;

3. Or that it was the result of a cunningly concocted fraud on their part.

This last alternative having been abandoned by unbelievers as hopelessly untenable, it will be unnecessary for us to consider it.

It, therefore, only remains for us to examine the truth of the second alternative, which is the position which is now commonly taken by unbelievers, that the belief in the resurrection was due to the hallucinations of the primitive followers of Jesus. This I propose doing in the next chapter. I have now only to remind the reader that the reality of the resurrection is the only miracle of those recorded in the Gospels on which the apostolic writers stake the truth of Christianity. Thus writes St. Paul :—

"If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, that He raised up Christ, Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised" (1 Cor. xv. 14, 15).

This being so, to this point we must now direct our utmost attention; for if Jesus rose from the dead, nothing more is wanted to prove the truth of His Divine mission; but if He did not really rise from the dead, no amount of evidence would avail to prove that He is the Christ. Further: if it can be proved, independently of the Gospels, that He rose from the dead, all the attacks of unbelievers on their authenticity are so much labour thrown away; and the simple Christian believer need not trouble himself with the voluminous controversy which has arisen in connection with this subject, for the various books which have been written on both sides of the question would form a library of no inconsiderable size.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST AN OBJECTIVE FACT.

"Brethren, be not children in mind; howbeit in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men," or, as in the margin, "of full age."—1 COR. xiv. 20.

I HAVE proved that within a very short time after the crucifixion the different Christian communities were in possession of an account of our Lord's actions and teaching analogous in all its chief outlines to that contained in our present Gospels; and that this must have been the same as that which was reported by the eye-witnesses of His ministry. This being so, all those theories which affirm that a large portion of their contents consists of a number of legendary and ideal creations which gradually sprung up during the first century of our era, are utterly discredited. I have also further proved, by the aid of the Pauline epistles, that within a very brief interval after the crucifixion the Church was reconstructed on the basis of the resurrection. As, therefore, no one now ventures to affirm that the belief in the resurrection originated in a fraud, only two alternatives remain, viz., that it was a reality, or the result of some kind of mental hallucination. This last is the theory which is generally accepted by

modern unbelievers, as affording a rational account of its origin. It is commonly designated "the theory of visions." It is, therefore, now become my duty to examine whether it is possible that the belief in the resurrection can have originated in any form of mental hallucination on the part of the primitive followers of Jesus.

Of the unquestionable facts of history the Church has always given the following solution, which no unbeliever can deny if the facts are real, that a sound philosophy must pronounce to be fully adequate to account for them,—viz., that Jesus Christ rose from the dead: that He had several interviews with His followers, in which He directed them to reconstruct the Church on the basis of His spiritual Messiahship! that He endowed them with supernatural powers, according to a promise made to them in these interviews, sufficient to enable them to accomplish the work He assigned to them: and that they obeyed His commands; and the result has been the creation of the Catholic Church, and the mighty influence which it has exerted on the destinies of men during the last eighteen centuries.

Modern unbelief, on the contrary, propounds the following theory as a rational solution of the facts to which I have referred in Part I. this volume,—Jesus Christ never rose from the dead, but while His body was turning to corruption in the grave, some of His enthusiastic followers fancied that they saw Him alive, and mistook the visionary creations of their distempered imaginations for an actual resurrection. They forthwith accepted it as a

fact, and reported to the other disciples that He was risen from the dead. These, in turn, took to seeing visions of the risen Jesus, which they mistook for objective realities. In the height of their fanaticism, they not only fancied that they had interviews with Him, but that they received His orders to reconstruct the Church. As, however, He intimated His intention of withdrawing Himself from public view, they thought that they received His commands to change the basis of His Messiahship from that of a present and visible Christ into an absent and spiritual one. The attempt was made, the Church was reconstructed, the new faith spread; and the result has been the erection of the greatest of institutions, and all the mighty effects which it has exerted in the history of man, on the foundation of the baseless delusions of a few credulous fanatics, who mistook a number of visionary appearances which had no existence outside their own minds for external realities. Surely, this theory, if true, involves a miracle as great as the resurrection itself.

But to impart to it even the semblance of plausibility, it is necessary to assume that the credulity of the original followers of Jesus was of the most extreme description, far in excess of the ordinary credulity of mankind. When, however, we ask for some proof of this, all that can be alleged is a few platitudes, such as that the Jews of that age were extremely credulous and superstitious, and that His followers believed in the reality of miracles and demoniacal possession. But to adduce this as a proof that they were credulous and superstitious to the

degree which this theory requires, is to assume the point which it is necessary to prove.

The theory in question is compelled to assume two things, both of which, under the historical conditions of the case, involve difficulties which amount to impossibilities.

1. That the followers of Jesus, both individually and when assembled in bodies, took to seeing visions of their Master risen from the dead, which they mistook for realities;

2. That they must also have believed that they had conversations with Him, in which they supposed that they received His definite instructions as to the new basis on which they were to reconstruct the Church. I say that they must have believed that they received these instructions, because it is incredible, if they believed that Jesus was risen from the dead, that they would have ventured to make the necessary change, unless they were persuaded that they had received His instructions to do so.

But according to well-established principles of mental physiology, one of three mental conditions is absolutely necessary to enable even the most credulous and enthusiastic to see visions and mistake them for realities. These are prepossession, fixed idea, and expectancy. The historical facts, however, render it certain that the expectancy of a resurrection was absolutely wanting; for not only during the whole of our Lord's ministry, but up to the very night before the crucifixion, the disciples were hoping for a Messiah after the Jewish type,—a hope that must have been utterly extinguished by His ignominious death at the hands

of the Roman Government. Instead of being in a state of expectancy, therefore, they were in one of profound despondency, the necessary consequence of blasted hopes and expectations. It is clear, also, that their prepossessions and fixed ideas would have been impotent to produce the necessary expectancy. In truth, they would have operated in a contrary direction, for they are both conservative of the ideas of the past. If, therefore, they had been operative in such force as to produce visions, they would have been visions of a Messiah and of a kingdom of God after the Jewish model, and not of a Christ and of a kingdom of God such as they actually proclaimed. But if we grant, for the sake of argument, that they saw visions of a risen Jesus, then His final withdrawal must have dashed in pieces all their hopes and expectations, for the essence of the Jewish conception was a present and victorious Christ, not one who withdrew himself alike out of the way of his friends and his foes. It is, therefore, impossible to ascribe either of these states of mind as affording a rational account of the origin of the belief in the resurrection.

But for the purpose of bringing these theories to the test of common sense, let us suppose all these difficulties to be non-existent, and that such a state of enthusiastic exultation existed among the disciples on the days immediately following the crucifixion, that some one of them fancied that he saw Him alive, and spread among the others the report that He was risen from the dead. It is usual among unbelievers to assign this office to Mary Magdalene,—who, for argument's sake, will do as well as any other,—and it has

been alleged that, in the height of her excitement, she mistook the gardener for Jesus. Is it credible, I ask, that a person enthusiastically attached to Him went away to report His resurrection to the disciples without attempting to speak to Him? If she had done so, her delusions would have been instantly dissipated. But let us assume that what she supposed she saw was not the gardener, but a visionary creation of her own disordered imagination. . Did she make no attempt to speak to her beloved Master? If she asked questions, did she get visionary answers and fancy herself charged with some message to the disciples? Surely, if she did, it must have contained some promise to meet them. If so, was the promise kept? Or did He promise to meet her again? If he did, and the appointment was not kept, it must have made short work with her delusions. If, however, she fancied that she had subsequent interviews with Him, she must have had a whole series of visions and ideal conversations, and have mistaken them for realities. Such things may be conceivable in theory, but they become absolutely incredible when tested by the realities of the world of fact.

But let us assume, for argument's sake, that some one of the disciples was thus bereft of reason. Are we to be invited to believe that in their state of despondency the other disciples received the announcement of the resurrection with open-mouthed credulity? Nothing is easier than to say that one of them communicated his or her enthusiasm to the others; but although easy to say, it would be in the highest degree difficult to do. Does all history, I ask, con-

tain anything analogous to it? While there is no great difficulty in persuading ignorant people that a ghost has appeared, it is a wholly different thing to persuade even the most greedy appetites for the marvellous that a person recently publicly executed has appeared again in bodily reality. Is it credible that such a piece of information should have been accepted on the bare word of the informant, or that the disciples should venture to confront the reigning powers with the story of the resurrection of one who had been recently crucified as a malefactor, and at the hazard of their lives proclaim Him to be the Christ and the King of the kingdom of God, on the bare word of one whom they must have known to be a fanatic? Was not the sepulchre close at hand; and did it not occur to one of them to examine it, or to one of those who had brought about the crucifixion, when they heard of the story of the resurrection, to produce the body, and thus effectually crush the delusion? But further. Would not one or more of His disciples have asked, Why does He not show Himself to us also? Nothing could have been more natural than the demand; and if they had been told that it was necessary that He should hide Himself, and retire out of the reach of His enemies, as the reason of His non-appearance, it would have speedily extinguished His Messianic claims, even in the opinion of the most credulous fanatic.

But the theory assumes that several of the disciples became so excited by the news that they also took to seeing visions of the risen Jesus, and mistaking them for realities.

This brings us to the very centre of the difficulty. The Pauline epistles prove beyond a doubt that these apparitions, if such they were, must have been seen, not only by a single follower of Jesus, but by many of them separately and conjointly. Thus the apostle informs us that the apostles believed that they had at least two interviews with Him when assembled together; that two of their number, Peter and James, believed that they had private interviews with Him; that it was the persuasion of the primitive believers that He appeared to more than five hundred of them in a body, of whom he affirms that more than half were still alive when he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, *i.e.*, twenty-seven years after the crucifixion, and that he was also firmly persuaded that He was seen by himself. The reader will see that I do not refer to the other appearances mentioned in the Gospels, for the obvious reason that unbelievers affirm that they are unhistorical.

Great efforts have been made to throw discredit on the apostle's statement, by affirming that he readily accepted hearsay reports, and that he gave himself no trouble to inquire into facts. The truth of this allegation I have already considered. I shall, therefore, simply appeal to the common sense of the reader, and ask him to consider whether it is believable that he turned from a violent persecutor of the Church into its most active missionary, and in consequence that he renounced every advantage which he possessed, and underwent all the sufferings which he has enumerated in the eleventh chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, without having attempted to ascertain

the nature of the facts on which Christianity was believed to rest. This, I say, is simply incredible.

But St. Paul's testimony carries with it that of Peter and James, for he informs us that during one of his visits to Jerusalem he lodged at Peter's house for fifteen days, and that during this interval he had one or more interviews with James. Is it credible, I ask, that, while staying with Peter for more than a fortnight, he did not ask him to give an account of his personal experiences respecting the resurrection? or that it did not form a topic of conversation during his interviews with James? It follows, therefore, from St. Paul's enumeration of our Lord's appearances in 1 Cor. xv., that each of these apostles believed that they had a private interview with Him after He was risen from the dead; that on two separate occasions they had interviews with Him in company with the other apostles, and consequently that the other apostles must have believed in the reality of these appearances; and that on a third occasion, in conformity with a previous appointment, He appeared to the whole body of the disciples. Lastly, St. Paul was persuaded that He had appeared to him, and the fact is unquestionable that his belief in the reality of this appearance changed the entire tenor of his life.

This being so, it is hardly possible to conceive of such a state of mental hallucination among the primitive followers of Jesus as this theory is compelled to presuppose as affording an adequate explanation of the historic facts. It is nothing short of this, that not only did individuals believe that they had private interviews with Jesus, but that a body

of persons, when assembled together, believed that on three separate occasions they saw Him alive in the midst of them, within a few days after He had been publicly executed; and that, too, when on two of these occasions the body must have been close at hand, unless it had been removed by the hands of His friends, in which case they must have known of its removal; or of His enemies, in which case it must have been a matter of public notoriety.

But for the sake of exposing the utter rottenness of this position, let us assume all these incredibilities to be credible. Here again we encounter all the difficulties to which I have above alluded with aggravated force. Is it credible under the circumstances in which the disciples were that during these appearances they would ask Him no questions? Some points of the profoundest interest must have had possession of their minds. What about the future? Was He going to withdraw Himself from public view, or would He confront His enemies? What about His Messianic claims? What course were His followers to adopt? These and numbers of similar questions must have been inevitable. Did they believe that they got answers to them? If they did, all these answers must have been as visionary as the appearances, the result of a common delusion; but if they get none, the delusion must have been dissipated.

In considering this subject, it is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of the existence of the Church as a visible institution from a brief interval after the crucifixion to the present hour. Those who

propound this theory forget that this is the most important fact to be accounted for; and they treat the whole subject as if they were merely investigating the origin of a ghost story. That this great society came into existence at a particular date, and in a particular place, is an historic fact. No less certain is it that the Messianic conception, on which it was reconstructed, was one wholly different in character from that which was entertained by the original followers of Jesus. The crucifixion rendered their old Messianic conceptions utterly untenable, and unless new ones had been speedily adopted, the little society must have eventually perished in its Founder's grave. Consequently, during the interval which elapsed between the crucifixion and the first attempt to reconstruct the Church, the disciples must have abandoned the old idea of a visible and conquering Messiah, who was to establish Jewish supremacy over the nations; and have adopted the new one of an invisible and spiritual one, and all the consequences thence resulting. But it is impossible to believe that they would have ventured on such a step unless they were firmly persuaded that they had received their Master's positive directions to reconstruct the Church on this new foundation; still more is it impossible to believe that they would have done so in view of all the opposition which they were certain to encounter. But if the theory we are considering is a true explanation of the facts, not only must the appearances and the interviews have been all visionary, but the conversations and instructions must have been so likewise. What does this mean? That the foundation on which

the Church was erected—that great society which has acted mightily on man for good during more than eighteen centuries of time—is the creation of the fatuous dreamings of a number of disordered imaginations. And all this we are invited to accept in the name of reason and philosophy rather than admit the reality of a miracle.

Perhaps the alleged phenomena of modern spiritualism, and the large number of intelligent persons who have affirmed their belief in their reality, will be urged in defence of these theories, as showing that it is possible for a number of enthusiastic persons to mistake internal impressions for external realities. The subject of spiritualism is one far too extensive to admit of its being discussed in a work of this description. I shall, therefore, only observe that supposing the alleged spiritualistic wonders to be the result of mistaking subjective impressions for external realities, these, and all similar phenomena, require the presence of at least one of the three mental states above referred to; but that the historical conditions prove that they must have been absolutely wanting in the case of the primitive followers of Jesus. Further: the belief in the resurrection has created the catholic Church and all the results which it has wrought in history; the belief in the spiritualistic marvels has created nothing. The belief in the one has changed the history of the world; the belief in the other has been barren of result. If its phenomena are real, it is certain that it could greatly aid the administration of justice in the detection of crime; but in this respect it has neither done good nor done evil. No passion is

stronger in the human mind than the love of gain; and if its reported facts are not delusions, it ought to possess an indefinite power of penetrating into a number of unknown secrets. But while the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the key which unlocks all history, the spiritualistic manifestations have not been able to effect even a single fluctuation on the Stock Exchange. To spiritualism, and other kindred wonders, the language of the old prophet may still be applied with perfect justice, "Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are as nothing, and your work of naught." When this, and other kindred wonders, produce results which are mighty in operation, and not mere ridiculous small talk, as the result of its so-called spiritualistic manifestations, it may then fairly demand of us a careful consideration of its claims.

One theory more has been propounded, as an alternative to the reality of the resurrection, which I am bound to notice, viz., that Jesus did not die from the effects of crucifixion; that He was taken down from the cross in a swoon; that He recovered consciousness in the sepulchre, succeeded in escaping to the house of some friend, where He gradually recovered; that He subsequently withdrew into retirement out of the reach of His enemies; and that this was mistaken by His credulous followers for a resurrection from the dead. This theory is encumbered with not a few of the difficulties with which the theory of visions is attended, and with many which are peculiar to itself.

We admit on the testimony of Josephus that it was possible for a person who had been suspended for some hours on the cross to recover *under careful treatment;* but, according to his account, the chances were two to one against it. This being so, the question into whose hands the body of Jesus was committed when taken down from the cross is a vital one. If recovery was possible, it must have passed into the hands of His friends; but the only authority for affirming that it did is that of the evangelists; and if it is good for this, it is good for a great deal more. The Jewish adversaries who brought about the crucifixion, and the soldiers who actually accomplished it, and who, from the frequency of such executions, must have been familiar with the symptoms of that kind of death, were not likely to have allowed the body to pass out of their hands while life remained. On the other hand, if the body continued in the custody of His enemies, recovery would have been impossible.

It is remarkable that the theory itself is a purely modern invention. None of the adversaries of Christianity during those ages when crucifixion was a common punishment, including such men as Celsus and Porphyry, ever expressed a suspicion as to whether Jesus had actually died. It is also clear that it never crossed the minds of His Jewish adversaries; nor even of the Apostle Paul, who, when he was a persecutor, must have investigated the entire subject. In plain truth, if the belief in the resurrection was the result of a slow and gradual recovery, and of His subsequent retirement from public view out of the reach of His enemies, then it is impossible to attribute the founda-

tion of the Church on the basis of His resurrection to anything short of deliberate fraud on the part of Jesus and some of His disciples, because it is inconceivable that Jesus Himself could have mistaken a gradual recovery for a resurrection, and those who had aided in His recovery and had conveyed Him to a place of safety must have well known what had become of Him. Is it possible, I ask, that any number of persons, however credulous, could have mistaken a man who had slowly recovered from his wounds, and afterwards died in obscurity, for such a Messiah as the exigencies of the Church demanded? Or, if the secret was confined to four or five persons, how were the other disciples to be induced to believe in their Master's resurrection, without being favoured with a sight of Him? It is a simple matter of fact that the Church was reconstructed on a new basis: Who suggested this change of front? Would the apostles have ventured to do so unless they had believed that they had their Master's authority for so doing? Was it, then, Jesus Himself? If so, while living in privacy out of the reach of His enemies, He must have directed them to propagate the belief that He was risen from the dead, and on this foundation to erect the Church; and, moreover, He must have induced them to incur the dangers of so doing,—dangers under which He had all but perished; and this, too, while He kept Himself at a safe distance from them! I feel assured that I need not further argue such a case, for the common sense of the reader will pronounce both this theory and the theory of visions to be utterly incredible.

The preceding reasonings, therefore, establish the following conclusions. The assumption that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, not only is a satisfactory explanation of all the historic facts, but is the only one which will explain them. The account, therefore, which the Church has always given of its origin is the only true one,—*He has risen from the dead.* His resurrection being thus established, the objections which are commonly urged against the Gospels, because they contain a miraculous narrative, disappear. They therefore take their genuine place in history; the Synoptics as three reports of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ as they were reported by the eye-witnesses of His ministry, and committed to writing during that interval of time within which traditionary reminiscences preserve all their freshness; and the fourth Gospel as an account of that same Divine life, derived from an independent source of information. This, from an evidential point of view, is all that we require. It proves the truth of our Lord's Divine mission, and, along with it, the truth of Christianity as a Divine revelation. To determine anything beyond this does not belong to that branch of theology which is strictly evidential, and to encumber ourselves with the defence of unnecessary positions tends rather to weaken than to strengthen our argument. The apostolic writers have staked the truth of Christianity on one miracle, and on one miracle alone, —the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Of this we have stronger proof than of any other event in the history of the past. This being so, to allow the truth of Christianity to be staked on any of thos-

numerous issues which at the present day are raised, as though its truth or falsehood depends on our ability to solve them, is not only wholly unnecessary, but in numerous cases extremely dangerous. "What sign," say the Jews, "showest Thou unto us, seeing Thou doest these things?" *i.e.*, the cleansing of the temple. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . He spake of the temple of His body."

CHAPTER XI.

CHRIST THE FULFILLER OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." —MATT. v. 17-19.

THE point which I propose to set before the reader in this chapter is, that all the rites and ceremonies of the legal dispensation and the various utterances of the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament have received their realisation in the person and work of Jesus Christ; and that, while in many respects, and owing to various causes, the moral teaching of these scriptures was imperfect, His teaching is the realisation of the true idea which underlay them. The Gospels inform us that our Lord, on several occasions, affirmed this of Himself; and the writers of the apostolic epistles again and again claim it for Him. What, then, is presupposed in this claim; and what is its evidential value? This claim presupposes:—

1. That the law, *i.e.*, the legal and ceremonial part of the Old Testament dispensation, was, to adopt the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a shadow of

the good things to come, not the very image of the things: (Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων,) that is to say, that its sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances were a delineation "of the good things to come," not with the precision which an image bears to that of which it is an image, but only as a shadow is a delineation of that of which it is the shadow. Of this shadowy outline Jesus Christ claims to be the realisation.

2. That the conception of a kingdom of God to be manifested in the future, and of One Who was to be its Messianic King, underlies the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament. Of this kingdom Jesus Christ claimed to be the King, and to be the realisation of these Messianic delineations.

3. That the moral utterances of the Old Testament, being not unfrequently accommodated to the low moral condition of the times, possessed various degrees of imperfection. Jesus Christ, in His person and teaching, claims to have fulfilled its moral teaching, *i.e.*, to have freed it from its imperfections, and to have realised the perfect ideal of morality.

Assuming, then, that both the legal ordinances and the prophetic scriptures and the moral teaching of the Old Testament receive their realisation in the person and work of Jesus Christ, what is the evidential value of such realisation? My answer is as follows;—

The scriptures of the Old Testament consist of a very varied literature,—legal, historical, poetical, prophetic, hortatory, and didactic, the composition of which extended over a period of more than a thousand years; and the books of which it is com-

posed are the works of at least forty different authors; yet, notwithstanding this variety of authorship and dates, the conception of a kingdom of God, to be manifested in the future, and of its Messianic King, pervades the whole of them, accompanied with a delineation both of the one and the other, with a distinctness which gradually increases as we descend the stream of time. With respect to these scriptures it is a point worthy of careful observation that this Messianic conception existed in the minds of the writers of these books in the closest union with a profound aspiration for its realisation, and a firm belief, notwithstanding every disappointment of their immediate hope, that it would ultimately be so. A conception of this kind, and a firm belief in its ultimate realisation, are to be found in no other equally varied literature, extending over an equal interval of time, and composed by an equal variety of authors. Further: all these prophetical writings are admitted even by the most sceptical writers to have been composed, with the exception of the Book of Daniel and a few of the Psalms, not later than 400 B.C. Briefly stated, the evidential value of these prophetical elements consists in the fact that they received their realisation in One Who was not born until 400 years after the last of the prophetic books of the Old Testament was composed; and that the earnest aspirations of all the great men who flourished during these long centuries receive their realisation in Him, and in Him alone. Such a fact proves the presence of superhuman foresight and of Divine adaptation.

Before entering on my immediate subject I must ask the reader to observe that it is impossible for me in a work of this description to discuss the typology of the Old Testament or its Messianic prophecies in detail. To do so would render it necessary that I should make a very considerable number of lengthy quotations from those scriptures on which it would be incumbent on me to write a commentary of no inconsiderable length, pointing out their Messianic character and the nature of their realisation in the person of our Lord. To do this would involve the entire space which can be devoted to this present work. All, therefore, that can be accomplished in a brief chapter is to lay down a few general principles, leaving it to the reader to give them their special application when he studies the Old Testament for himself.

In the passage which I have placed as the motto of this chapter, our Lord affirms that "He came not to destroy the law or the prophets; *I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.*" This being so, it is of the highest importance that we should have a clear conception of His meaning.

The idea is widespread among ordinary students of the Bible that the characteristic function of the prophet was to predict the future; and that a prediction means a declaration that a particular event will happen at some period in the future; and its fulfilment, the happening of such an event in exact accordance with the prediction. This, however, is to take a very inadequate view of the prophetic office of the Old Testament scriptures.

The reader cannot fail to observe that while the

prophetic writings contain a predictive element, they contain a great deal more than mere prediction. This a cursory perusal of them is sufficient to prove. The prophet's special function was to be a spokesman on behalf of God. Thus, John the Baptist was a prophet, but he uttered no predictions. Precisely similar was it with the prophet of the apostolic Church. In it he ranked next to an apostle (1 Cor. xiv. 8), but while, as in the case of Agabus, he was occasionally favoured with revelations of the future, his special function, as described by St. Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 24), was to speak unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation; to edify the Church, and to appeal to the consciences of unbelievers. In a word, the functions of the prophet more nearly resembled those of the preacher than of the foreteller of the future. It is necessary to draw attention to this, because when our Lord affirmed that one of the purposes of His mission was "to fulfil the law and the prophets," His meaning is, that He came for the purpose, not only of fulfilling their predictions and realising their types, but also of perfecting their moral teaching.

Next as to the meaning of the word "fulfil." Both in the Authorised and the Revised Version this word is for the most part a translation of the Greek word πληρόω. Its meaning is far wider than that which is usually attached to its English counterpart. It means to *fill up full, i.e., fully to realise.* This was unquestionably the original meaning of the English word, and it is not unfrequently even now used in this sense; but the ordinary reader of the

New Testament almost invariably restricts its meaning to the accomplishment of a prediction. To do so, however, is to miss its meaning, as it is used in the Gospels. Thus the Sermon on the Mount is a fulfilment of the law and the prophets, in that it is a realisation of the true moral idea which underlay their imperfect utterances, *i.e.*, "it filled them up full." So when St. Matthew says, "That it might be fulfilled that was spoken by the prophets, that He should be called a Nazarene," the obvious meaning of the Evangelist is that the term Nazarene, applied to our Lord, was a realisation of the prophetic utterances respecting the lowly condition of the Messiah, the real fact being that no such words are to be found in the Old Testament. Similarly, when the same Evangelist says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases," he does not mean that the prophetic utterance was fulfilled in our Lord's taking on Himself the diseases which He cured, but that it was realised in a far higher sense in the multitude of the cures which He effected, and in the intensity of the sympathy for human suffering which He manifested. Speaking generally, therefore, the law and the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in that all that was read in the sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances of the law and the utterances of the prophets, received in His person and work their complete realisation; and that His teaching was a "filling up to the full" of the true idea which underlay their imperfect moral utterances.

The question before us, therefore, resolves itself into one of fact. Are the law and the prophets thus realised in Him? To enable me to answer this question, I must first ask the reader's attention to a few facts respecting the sacrificial system of the ancient world.

Sacrifice was no peculiarity of Judaism. At the time of the advent it was universal in the ancient world. In some form or other it entered into every department of life, whether religious, political, or social. It was not only universal when Christianity appeared, but it had been so from the earliest dawn of history. To discuss its origin is beyond the scope of the present work. All that we here are concerned with is the fact of its universality. This proves that there is something in the nature of man to which it is congenial; or, in other words, that it was an attempt to realise some aspiration deeply seated in it.

The sacrificial system of the ancient world consisted of two distinct factors, viz., sacrifices which were and sacrifices which were not attended with the shedding of blood. The last consisted of various kinds of offerings, some of which were offered by the worshipper (I am speaking of the Pagan worshipper) in gratitude for benefits which he supposed that he had received from his gods; and others, which he thought would be acceptable to them, and would procure their favour. But the bloody sacrifices originated in a sense of guilt,—a feeling which in numerous cases was so profound that the offering of a human victim was supposed to be its only adequate expiation. The

sacrificial idea cannot be better expressed than in the words of the prophet Micah, when he represents Balak as saying to Balaam, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah vi. 5).

Such was the universal cry of the human heart in the ancient world, of which its sacrificial system was intended to be the satisfaction. I need scarcely remind the reader that, while the scriptures of the Old Testament most emphatically forbid the offering of a human victim, a similar sacrificial system constituted the most striking feature of the Temple worship.

What, then, is the affirmation of the writers of the New Testament? That Jesus Christ, in His person and work, has so completely realised everything to which this sacrificial system pointed, that it is from henceforth nullified and valueless. Do facts justify this affirmation? I observe:

1. Wherever Christianity has been embraced, sacrifices have ceased. This fact is a most remarkable one, for this rite formed an essential element in the religion of the ancestors of every one of the Christian nations. We all know how deep is the tendency of religious rites to perpetuate themselves; yet a bloody sacrifice has never once been offered in the Christian Church. What, I ask, does this prove?

That the original converts who embraced Christianity felt that the person and work of Jesus Christ was the complete realisation of everything in those sacrificial systems to which, from their earliest infancy, they had been accustomed. In a word, it satisfied their entire wants and aspirations.

2. It is an undeniable fact that Christianity has grown out of Judaism, and that it acknowledges the authority of the scriptures of the Old Testament. Yet it is no less certain that it has superseded the whole of its sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances. That one religion should grow out of another, acknowledge its Divine authority, and yet supersede its entire ritual, is, I believe, a unique fact in the history of man, and can be only accounted for on the principle that the one is felt to be the complete realisation of every reality which is contained in the other, the reality which is the counterpart being the person and work of Jesus Christ.

3. Every writer in the New Testament, with the exception of St. Luke, and probably of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was a Jew, educated in the strictest principles of Judaism. In the minds of such its sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances must have held a place of supreme importance, and as they all esteemed them to be of Divine authority, they must have felt the utmost difficulty in accepting it as a truth that the Messiah of Old Testament prediction, and the prophet like unto Moses, would utterly abolish them. Yet their writings prove that, while they allowed Christians who were Jews by birth to

continue to practise certain of these rites, not because they considered them to be binding on the conscience, but as part of the national customs in which they had been educated, they accepted their abolition as a truth. What, I ask, does so singular a fact prove? That they must have considered the idea which underlay them so perfectly realised in the person and work of their Master, that the sacrifice and ceremonies themselves were from henceforth become both meaningless and valueless.

What, then, is the evidential value of these facts? It may be briefly stated thus: The sacrificial system of the ancient world was intended to satisfy one of the deepest cravings of the human mind, but it did this most imperfectly. After long ages, however, One appeared, Who in His person and work satisfied it so completely that the whole of this complicated system has gradually vanished away, and is now become utterly extinct. Can He, I ask, Who in His person and work has realized all the varied aspirations of the human mind, which this system was intended to satisfy, but which only did so most imperfectly, be a mere man like ourselves?

It will, perhaps, occur to some of my readers that I am not strictly correct in affirming that sacrifice has ceased in the Christian Church, but, on the contrary, that the majority of Christians view the celebration of what is designated "the Mass" to be a sacrifice. To discuss what is the true doctrine of the Holy Communion is beyond the scope of the present work. It will be sufficient to observe that

two different views are entertained respecting it by the two great sections into which the Church is divided; the one is, that in the Holy Communion "the once for all perfect sacrifice of Christ" is presented to the Father for the remission of sins; and the other, that the same perfect sacrifice is presented to the believer's soul as its spiritual food and sustenance. In neither case, however, is the sacrifice supposed to be repeated; and in that section of the Church in which the Holy Communion is viewed as a fresh presentation of the once for all perfect sacrifice of Christ to the Father, it is designated "the unbloody sacrifice." It is true, therefore, that while the sacrificial idea concentrated in the person of our Lord exists in every section of the Christian Church, all sacrifices which involve the shedding of blood have utterly ceased therein.

4. Next, with respect to that numerous class of offerings under the Old Testament dispensation in which there was no shedding of blood. These were special gifts on the part of the worshipper, intended to be expressions of gratitude for special mercies received. These, through the work of Christ, have received their realisation in the Christian Church in the only sacrifice which, according to the teaching of the New Testament, is acceptable to God; not in any partial offering on the part of the worshipper, but in one far nobler and more perfect, viz., the consecration of a man's self, his soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice to God in return for the love of Christ for him. Christianity will accept nothing less.

5. Another idea, which was fundamental to the Old Testament dispensation, was that of a priesthood. What does it imply? That there is some feeling in the inmost depths of the human spirit which suggests the necessity of an intermediatory between God and man, through whom alone he can make an acceptable approach to God. All the priesthoods of the ancient world were an imperfect attempt to satisfy this feeling. I say "imperfect," because it is obvious that the feeling could not attain its satisfaction in any mere human priest, who, after all, was really as imperfect as the worshipper. Priests of this kind were priests by institution, and not by inherent right, and, consequently, were incapable of any effectual interposition. But the perfection of the person, work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the complete realisation of the idea of the priesthood. He is, therefore, the one Priest of the Christian Church through Whom every man can draw near to God; and as being the perfect embodiment of the idea of priesthood, He has abolished every other priesthood, whether of Divine or human institution; or, in the words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Such a High Priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; yet capable of being touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Who needeth not daily to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people; but this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." Having thus in His own person realised the entire truth, which underlay the idea of priesthood and sacrifice, He has rendered

nugatory every priesthood and sacrifice but His own.

6. Jesus Christ, the Fulfiller of the moral utterances of the Old Testament dispensation.

The word "fulfil," when applied to our Lord's teaching, must be understood in the strict meaning of the English word and of the Greek, of which it is a translation, *i.e.*, that it fills up full, or completely realises the idea which underlay the moral utterances of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and frees them from all their imperfections. Does our Lord's teaching accomplish this? I answer that His teaching is a perfect embodiment of the whole duty of man, whether due to God or to His brother man, than which it is impossible to conceive anything higher or more complete. To adopt the language of the late Professor Mozley, "If there is anything in the teaching of the Old Testament that is a falling short, which goes a certain way, but not the whole way, as in the imperfect law of marriage, in the imperfect law of love, and in the law of retaliation, it is assumed that the essence of the law is not all this; and that, on the other hand, what is perfect is the law. We know nothing from henceforth but the perfect law commanding in the conscience 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect.'" *

I have placed before the reader in the seventh chapter of this work, in which I have considered the evidential value of our Lord's moral teaching,

* "Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages, in their Relation to Old Testament Faith," p. 105.

sufficient materials to enable him to appreciate the mode in which He claims to be the Fulfiller of the moral utterances of the scriptures of the Old Testament. I need not, therefore, repeat them here. It will be sufficient in this place to refer to His teaching in the first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount as an illustration.

In this discourse the Legislator of the kingdom of heaven, instead of propounding a set of rules of duty, pronounces His blessing on eight conditions of mind as being the character fitted for citizenship in His kingdom. He then proceeds to "fill up full" the old law, which said, "Thou shalt not kill," by extending it to any act calculated to do another harm. In a similar manner, the old law prohibiting adultery is extended from the actual act to the inmost thoughts. The law which forbad perjury is to be realised in simple truth-speaking; the law of retaliation in doing to another as a man would that another should do to himself; and the law which, while it required love to a neighbour, allowed hatred to an enemy, by the duty of loving enemies and praying for them. The same principles pervade the entire discourse, the whole of which is summed up elsewhere in the great utterance, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."

7. Christ the Fulfiller of the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament.

Two conceptions underlie nearly every one of the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament, viz., the idea of a kingdom of God to be manifested in the

future, and that of a great Deliverer, Who was to reign therein as its Messianic King. This kingdom was for the most part conceived of by the prophets as a state of things in which the old Theocracy, freed from all the imperfections of the past, would receive its complete realisation; in the blessings of which the Gentile nations would participate; and in which, after a terrible destruction of the enemies of God, righteousness and peace would reign supreme. Some of the prophets, however, viewed this kingdom from a higher standpoint, and contemplated it as a purely spiritual kingdom, in which all ritual worship would cease, and in which obedience would be rendered, not to a mere written law, but would flow as a natural result of the inward condition of the heart, as in the following remarkable prediction of the prophet Jeremiah:—

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them even to the

greatest of them; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jer. xxxi. 31-35).

Most of the prophetic scriptures are not equally clear as to the purely spiritual character of this kingdom, as in the utterance above cited; but they all concur in the anticipation of a future kingdom of God, incomparably more perfect than anything which had existed in the past; and to this anticipation they clung, notwithstanding all the disappointments of the present. Let it be observed that every one of these predictions was uttered long centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. Has, then, the underlying idea of these utterances of the prophets received its realisation?

I answer that it is an undeniable fact that long centuries after the date of these utterances Jesus Christ founded a kingdom, the object of which is, not only to realise the idea of the old Theocracy, but the highest anticipations of the prophets. The nature of this kingdom, the opposition which it had to overcome, and the work which it has accomplished, I have already set before the reader in numerous places of Part I. of this work. I have only further to observe that, although it has not yet realised *in fact* the fulness of the prophetic delineations, yet it does so in the fundamental principles on which it is based; and that it is at the present moment actively engaged in leavening with those principles the whole lump of humanity.

Further: these Scriptures present us with two distinct delineations of its Messianic King, viz., one in which He is depicted as a triumphant Conqueror, Who,

after the destruction of His enemies, would establish the reign of righteousness and peace; and the second, in which He is depicted as a Sufferer even unto death, Whose sufferings were to be undergone for the sake of others, and by means of which He was to achieve a glorious triumph, and become, in right of inherent worthiness, the King of the kingdom of God. Not to mention numerous other scriptures, both these delineations of Him pervade the prophet Isaiah; the latter under the designation of the "Servant of Jehovah," the different delineations of Whom, whatever may have been their primary reference, have unquestionably received their perfect realisation in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in His sufferings, death, resurrection, and His present kingship in the kingdom of God. The fact that the prophetic delineations of the suffering Christ have received their realisation in the person of our Lord may full well be accepted as a pledge that everything which is spiritual and eternal in these delineations of the triumphant Christ will in due time receive its accomplishment.

The space at my command renders it impossible that I should enter on the consideration of special prophecies. The greatest of them, however, I have already considered in the second chapter of this book, —a prophecy which has been so completely realised in this our day, that those who are unconvinced by its fulfilment will remain unconvinced by the fulfilment of every other.

Let me now briefly sum up the prophetic argument, and set before the reader its conjoint force. The Old Testament, many centuries before the birth

of Jesus Christ, announced that it was the Divine purpose at some period of the future to set up a kingdom of God, and the advent of its Messianic King. Such a kingdom has been set up by Jesus Christ, in which He reigns as King. It affirms that a prophet should appear like unto Moses. A multitude of prophets have appeared, but the only one who bears this resemblance to Moses is Jesus Christ. It has described a person of exalted holiness, and possessing a superhuman character, as suffering for others. The full conception of such a character is realised in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. It announces a Messiah, Who was to be a royal priest. Jesus Christ has assumed this office, and nullified every priesthood and sacrifice but His own. The Jewish dispensation consisted of a mass of rites, symbols, shadowy representations, and ceremonies. Jesus Christ and His Church are the embodiment of the reality which underlay them, and have rendered them for all future time as useless as it would be to hold up a candle to the noonday sun. Its great kings and prophets earnestly longed for better things to come. These aspirations have received their satisfaction in the person, actions, and teaching of the Divine Man. The teaching of the Old Testament, while it was founded on eternal truth, bears evident marks of imperfections; owing to the necessity of accommodating it to the low moral condition of the times. Jesus Christ, in His teaching and character, is the embodiment of the ideal after which the law and the prophets were dimly groping. In a word, the whole of the typology, prediction,

and the moral teaching of the Old Testament, and the earnest aspirations of its great characters, converge in a common centre in the one great Catholic Man, Jesus Christ our Lord, in Whom, and in Whom alone, they receive their adequate satisfaction.